



토이카 현대판타지 소설

무한경쟁

INFINITE COMPETITIVE DUNGEON SOCIETY

BOOK 03

Toika

EPUB CREATION BY LISA HAYES

Infinite Competitive Dungeon Society

(무한경쟁던전사회)

by

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Synopsis

The second moon marked the beginning of a revolutionary change.

With the emergence of monsters and dungeons in modern society, and the ability users who fights against them, the world faces a shift in its paradigm.

It heralds the advent of a new energy source and the decline of traditional occupations.

Common sense thus becomes uncommon sense, and imagination becomes reality.

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Chapter 201. Second Season (4)

What kind of a golem had bones!? If it's a bone golem, it should only be made of bones. Alternatively, if it's a flesh golem made of a mixture of bones and flesh, it should be covered with disgusting rotten flesh. But this guy was neither! I scrutinized it closely and realized something. It wasn't a golem!

“Are you...”

[Kuha!]

Its steel arm extended like a certain pirate king candidate's and shot toward me. As I thought, this wasn't a golem, but a living being! Golems couldn't freely transform their bodies like that. However, it could maintain its steel body and stretch its arm. What was its identity? Did it really have bones underneath all that steel...? No, now wasn't the time to leisurely think about it.

“Lotte, dodge!”

[Leave it to me!]

Lotte dodged the steel arm in an instant. At the same time, her wings produced a raging whirlpool of black flames. It seemed she had gotten stronger from the trip to the Panan continent. Was it because she spent more time with me? Or was it because she participated in battles? Regardless, I may need to reconsider how I let Plene grow.

[Hero, it's trying to do something!]

“It's fine. I know what it is, so let's finish it now.”

The 60th Floor Master wasn't worthy of blocking my way for over 9 seconds. It seemed its ability was freely manipulating its large steel-like body. Though it probably had one or two hidden skills, I didn't care. Rather than waiting for it to use them, I decided to just kill it.

However, just when I thought that, its steel body began to boil. As Lotte said, it seemed to be preparing for something.

“What is that?”

[An opening, Hero!]

Right! Lotte flew forward at an incredible speed. Meanwhile, I compressed the elongated spear blade and enveloped it with my white aura and chaos flames. My skill of choice was Heroic Strike.

It seemed to be trying to transform its body to something. However, before its boiling body could complete the transformation, I reached it. Cutting off a transformation was one of the best feelings!

“Sacrifice!”

A black aura seemed to wrap itself over the spear blade. Realizing that the spear blade now contained an immense amount of power, I slightly hesitated to thrust forward. However, thinking that it was probably better to hurt myself than letting it do something suspicious, I thrust my spear forward.

[Critical Hit!]

My spear penetrated its body before the transformation completed. At the same time, I felt a heart rupturing amount of pain. It was as if someone squeezed my heart and set it aflame. The pain then spread through my body. Perhaps this was what being in lava felt like. Alternatively, it could be like being pierced with a thousand needles.

In an instant, everything within my sight turned white. This skill... I couldn't take it lightly. The damage I took was one thing, but more importantly, it even stopped me from moving for a moment. If it didn't finish the enemy, I would be vulnerable to the enemy's attack.

That said, I was only taking 50% of the damage, while the enemy received 200% of the damage. Currently, with the enemy having bones and receiving a critical hit, the damage it took totaled to 600%. Whatever this golem-like thing was, it instantly exploded in the middle of its transformation. Blowing up a Floor Master... Sacrifice, I like you!

[A Grand Achievement! You defeated the Floor Master, 'Superior Doppelganger', alone! Amazing!]

[You became level 61. You obtained the qualification to challenge Beyond's 10th floor.]

[You obtained 5 bonus stats.]

[You obtained the title, 'Superior Doppelganger Slayer'. All stats permanently increase by 1. This effect will apply even if the title is not equipped.]

[You became Gold Rank 6. Congratulations.]

[You defeated the Superior Doppelganger alone. You obtained the special reward, 'Superior Doppelganger's Hat.']

[You obtained 400,000 gold.]

[Choose your reward.]

[1. Weapon Swap Magic Book.]

After confirming its death, I fell on Lotte's back. Right, if it didn't die with how much damage I dealt to myself, I would be troubled. But doppelganger? I was right! After all, doppelgangers were closer to mimics than golems!

[Are you okay, Hero? It looked like you received a huge blow just now.]

"Yeah, I'm fine. In fact, this much pain makes me happy slightly. It snaps me awake, you know? It's not like I like pain or anything, but it helps me not overestimate myself."

[Wise words as expected of a warrior.]

I smiled at Lotte's words while circulating Peruta Circuit and recovering. It seemed my HP never fell under 10%. After battling

this Floor Master, I became certain about one thing.

Sacrifice had a clear flaw, but if used correctly, it would be of great help to me. It was probably best to use it with weaker skills to minimize the damage I took, or conversely with extremely powerful skills when I knew it would surely kill the enemy. Or perhaps, using this skill with Devourer could mitigate Sacrifice's flaw.

“Anyways, it looks like I'm not the first one to clear this floor solo on my first try... Well, I guess it isn't that surprising. I wouldn't be surprised if it was the same for the future floors.”

The world was infinite and full of outstanding explorers. There were undoubtedly other talented explorers who could defeat Floor Masters alone on their first try. In fact, Daisy probably could do it without much difficulty.

For now, I decided to look at the reward. Though I wasn't expecting much, I quelled the thought and chose the reward. Immediately, a message rang out.

[You learned 'Weapon Swap.' By using 1,000 MP, you can instantly store the weapon in your hand into your inventory and replace it with another weapon. When empty-handed, you can instantly equip your weapon. Conversely, you can instantly unequip your weapon, becoming empty-handed. For 15 seconds after using Weapon Swap, your weapon's performance increases by 10%. The buff duration and performance increase are enhanced with skill levels.]

“Huh?”

That wasn't so bad! I was curious why something that sounded like a physical technique came in a magic book, but with an effect like this, it really was more like magic.

For example, if an enemy ambushed me while I was empty-handed, I could use Weapon Swap and instantly equip my spear. Although my spear would take the form of a choker, it was still easier to directly summon it in my hands than having to reach for it.

Plus, this skill would let me change between different battle methods. Weapon Swap's strong point was being able to use it without any delay. Although I had to use 1,000 MP, that much was an expenditure I could easily handle. Plus, with this skill, I would be able to use different weapons depending on the situation, which I had found difficult to do in the heat of battle.

My Crossbow Marksmanship was high-ranked. Attacking enemies far away was significantly easier with a crossbow than a spear. If I felt like an enemy was nearing me, I would be able to swap to my spear instantly. I quite liked it.

Not to mention, I could now do something entirely new... Huhu.

“Alright, let's start the grinding!”

Encouraged by the new skill that was better than my

expectations, I jumped down from Lotte's back so she could transform back to her human form. After all, she wouldn't be able to leave through the door otherwise!

[Hero, Hero's body is shaking.]

"I might be a bit anemic... Let's rest for a bit..."

I almost forgot about the HP I lost from Sacrifice! Once I left the Floor Master room, I bought a Fatigue Recovery Juice and Special HP Recovery Meat Skewer from Loretta. It was only then that I continued with the Superior Doppelganger grinding.

[Kuaaaaaaaa! Human, I will—]

"Die!"

Right when the Superior Doppelganger was about to transform with a villain-like line, I killed it with my spear. As this was today's 10th fight or the last, I happily ended it with Sacrifice Heroic Strike. Now that I had felt the pain from Sacrifice a few times, I felt like I had gotten somewhat used to it. I trembled at my potential.

"Or maybe, I'm just becoming a pervert..."

Damn, I'd rather not have said it!

I resented my instincts and chose the item I desired from the reward list. The 60th floor also had strengthening elixir. It was none other than the 'Mana Circulation Elixir.'

Somewhat like the other elixirs, the Mana Circulation Elixir raised my magic and charm by 1. Supposedly, it cleaned the internal pathway used for mana circulation and increased the quality of mana. Because of it, I felt like I was getting cleaner every time I ate one. It was undoubtedly a placebo effect.

It took exactly one hour to defeat the Superior Doppelganger 10 times. I'd kill one every 5 minutes and rested for a minute, so it was about right. These Superior Doppelgangers were rather easy to hunt. I just had to kill them before they transformed!

Although they appeared as a giant golem, the moment they received damage, they started transforming. As I'd never seen them complete their transformation, I still didn't know what they were transforming into. My guess was that they took the form of the explorer that damaged it.

Since they started transforming after receiving damage, I easily killed them by taking their head with the first attack or by using two attacks before they finished their transformation. It was too obvious that their real attacks began after their transformation.

Although killing them with first blow was ideal, for explorers that weren't confident in their attack power, it was probably better to kill them with their second attacks. After all, while they transformed, they were noticeably slower. Of course, if they couldn't kill them by the second blow, it was better to just give up.

... Why was I talking about this?

When I left the Floor Master room with a tired expression, Loretta, who was waiting at the Floor Shop, smiled brightly and jumped on me.

“Shin-nim, that was the tenth, right? Then play with me. You can buy some items while you’re at it.”

“I think the ‘while I’m at it’ part is what you really want.”

“How rude! It’s half-half!”

I ignored Loretta’s pleading eyes and bought more of the relatively low-priced Fatigue Recovery Juice and HP Recovery Meat Skewers. Even as she sold them, Loretta tilted her head.

“Shin-nim, why do you need them? Didn’t you finish grinding for the day?”

“Ah, you see, Loretta... That’s because the second season of thrashing phase is beginning now.”

“Thrashing phase...?”

Loretta looked like she had heard the phrase before. Meanwhile, I snickered with an evil grin. That was what a thrashing phase

was.

Ever since I went through the thrashing phase with Father, I always thought that it was more to alleviate the teacher's stress than to help the student fix a habit. Now, I knew the answer. Fixing a student's habit and alleviating a teacher's stress. It was half-half!

[Crown Prince, I'm at the training room... Is it really happening?]

[I'll be there in a moment, Ren!]

[Take your time, please!]

The thrashing phase full of Ren's pain and my happiness was waiting.

Chapter 202. Second Season (5)

With Loretta reluctant to let go of me, I had to buy highest-grade Health Potions, Mana Potions, and some bolts with high-grade magic imbued in them. After that, I headed to the guild house. Of course, getting Loretta off was quite a work.

“I’ll be the lady of the house eventually anyway!”

“Don’t you get tired? Even if you come, you’ll only see two sweaty men fighting each other.”

“I want to go even more now!”

“Eit, go away!”

When I finally arrived at Marianne’s Garden, the garden, which had now become spacious with the old residents Flame Drake (aka Pookie) and Giant Iron Boar (aka Iana) moving out, had Hwaya sitting under a parasol and reading. It was a rather strange scene.

“Oh, Shin. Welcome back.”

“Hwaya? Why are you out in the garden? You’re not doing anything either.”

“Ina’s going to come soon. She’s hunting the 45th Floor Master right now.”

“Ah. Um... Sorry. I have to train with Ren for a while, so I’ll have to shamelessly leave you to take care of Ina.”

At my apology, Hwaya smiled lightly and answered.

“It’s fine. I’m calculating each and everything anyways. I’m thinking about the reward I’ll get out of you with all the points I accumulated. A hug, kiss, dinner, date, and... Huhu.”

“Huhu? What is that supposed to mean?”

“Ahaha, I’m kidding. Well, half-kidding. For the record, I have 2.7 Huhus saved up.”

“You have no plans to hide your indecent desires, do you!?”

At my question, Hwaya narrowed her eyes and smiled. Then, she tapped the seat next to her and gestured me to come over.

“Stay for a while. Leave that lionhead alone. We can spend some quality family time with Ina. How about it, Ina’s Daddy?”

“Really... That’s an enticing offer, but I’ll have to pass for today. It’s an important time for Ren... I have to teach him how to wield the world’s power too.”

“Hmm, you’re feeling responsible for making him a Hero. Ah, I

want to take your place as Earth's Hero. That way, I might get stronger than you and you'll try your best to protect me too."

"Hmph, this power is mine. I won't give it to anyone."

When I retorted curtly, Hwaya's smile got bigger.

"I was kidding, Guild Master. I'll be the one to protect you. Although it would be nice to be in the Hero's position, I don't really want to be a princess to be protected."

"I don't like just being protected either. Oh, that reminds me..."

When the guild advanced to rank B, there was a function it gained. It was being able to appoint a vice-guild master given that the guild had more than 10 members. A vice-guild master could officially complete guild-related business like accepting new guild members or kicking out existing guild members. Vice-guild masters of the First Dungeon's powerful guilds all held great authorities. Though, I couldn't say whether Revival would also be like that.

"Hwaya, if it's okay with you... can you be our guild's vice-guild master? You've done a lot until now, and you're really the only one I can think of who can fill that position. You have the ability and sense of responsibility, and you're even close with everyone in the guild. How about it?"

"Is that a proposal?"

“Of course not. Good try though.”

“Tsk.”

Hwaya pouted. Though she was older than me, she was really quite cute. When I patted her head, she spoke with a softened expression.

“... Okay. To be honest, I also think I’m the only one who can be a vice-guild master.”

“Great. Although something like this should be done through votes, I’m going to ignore all that and use my authority as the guild master to appoint you the vice-guild master.”

“Mm, charming.”

[Hwaya Eleni Mastiford became guild Revival’s vice-master!]

After confirming that Hwaya became the vice-guild master through the message, I took my hand off her head and extended it toward her.

“Continue with your excellent work, Vice-guild Master.”

“At your service, Guild Master.”

Just like that, Revival's vice-guild master was chosen.

[Guild Revival: Guild Rank B]

[Guild member: Kang Shin (Guild Master, First – Gold), Hwaya Eleni Mastiford (Vice-guild Master, Second – Gold), Daisy Ectradion (First – Platinum), Lebuik Vandeon Granaris, Kang Yungoong, Su Ye-Eun, Ren Verotude Goldlion, Palludia Gren Ehuir, Shuna Aren Lihita (First – Gold), Illina Alexandrovna Mikhalova, Kang Yua (First – Silver), Minami Violet Sumire (Second – Gold), Edward Walker (Second – Silver), Sophie Brightman (Third – Gold). Total: 14]

“Hm.”

After saying goodbye around the time Ina arrived, I went into the mansion and opened the guild status window. In truth, I was rather surprised. Ludia and Shuna had become Gold rank explorers before I noticed, and with Daisy breaking through Beyond's 13th floor and entering the First Dungeon's 81st floor, I naturally learned when Daisy first entered Beyond.

Hwaya would reach Platinum rank soon to advance to the First Dungeon, and considering the talent Sumire showed in our spars, she would probably follow suit. As for Walker, he'd advanced to the Second Dungeon without telling me anything about it. It seemed Xin Shaomei's ability was helping him greatly. That said, after he reached the Platinum rank in the Third Dungeon, he went down to the Second Dungeon's Silver rank instead of Gold rank. I pitied him slightly. It seemed he was either lacking in achievements or some other conditions.

As for Ina, there wasn't much to say about her. Even before she became an explorer, she was almost as strong as Hwaya and me. The dungeon was merely a playground for her, as she could use her magic power as much as she wanted. She cleared the 45th floor today and would soon become Gold rank. Only then would her speed slow down slightly. Perhaps, she might even enter Beyond.

The one I was really worried about was my sister, Yua, and the young lady of nobility in charge of a conglomerate, Sophie. Although they were both elites who weren't lacking in qualities deemed desirable in society, their constitutions were both far from physical activities.

However, it seemed my worrying was for naught. The two SS rank abilities I took from Luca Bruno and Joshua Brightman found their respective owners, and they were shining more and more as the girls climbed the dungeon.

Yua had tamed all 278 mantis larvae, and she was now learning the dungeon's system step-by-step as she learned and raised new skills. She probably wouldn't need more tamed beasts. After all, fully grown mantises could even fly. Although ordinary mantises couldn't fly for long, the ones she tamed came from the Evil Mantis Queen. Their genes were undoubtedly superior to the ordinary mantises'. With Yua's ability supporting them... I stopped thinking about it as I started getting goosebumps on my arms.

As for Sophie, who was the second most passionate woman after Hwaya, she was surprisingly in the guild house at the moment. With her brilliant blonde hair tied up in a ponytail and wearing a

tank top and hot pants, she was sparring with Ye-Eun in the underground training room. As Ye-Eun was also wearing casual clothes, they looked quite nice together.

“Haa!”

“Kuk, coming from the back again!”

“No, both sides!”

Although Ye-Eun was right in front of Sophie’s eyes, Ye-Eun’s dagger flew toward Sophie from behind her. Sophie quickly spun around and blocked it with just two fingers, but surprisingly, it was a clone. Ye-Eun was still in front of Sophie, and in an instant, Ye-Eun’s elbow struck Sophie down.

“A clone?”

“I just added mana into my shadow and gave it mass. Master said it was one of the most simple techniques!”

“No, your Master is strange. Realize it already.”

While I pointed out Ye-Eun’s faulty statement, Sophie got up as she groaned. The spar must have been quite intense as a Gold rank explorer such as herself was dripping with sweat.

“Huu, huu... So strong.”

“Huhu, of course. I’ll become a Beyond explorer after all!”

“Hmph, when I become Platinum ranked, I’ll advance to the Second Dungeon’s Gold rank, and when I become Platinum there, I can become the First Dungeon’s Gold rank explorer!”

Now that she mentioned it, it was rather scary how fast she advanced. Since she was on the Third Dungeon’s 75th floor while ravaging through all Floor Masters alone, she would undoubtedly advance to the Second Dungeon within the next month.

“You might even catch up to Walker at this rate.”

“No, I’m only trying so hard so I can be with Edward.”

“I, I see. Well, good luck, Miss Sophie.”

“Edward is advancing quickly too. By the time I advance to the Second Dungeon, he’ll be Gold ranked. Don’t underestimate his desire to improve!”

“Maybe he’s just working hard so he doesn’t have to be with... Er, nothing, nevermind.”

Mm, her spirit was already stronger than Joshua Brightman’s. Sophie getting his ability was definitely good for Earth!

“So why are you with Ye-Eun?”

“Her fighting style is the most similar to Walker’s out of everyone in the guild. I’m trying to learn how to work with Walker by sparring her. I have a lot to learn from her, really.”

“Ehehe.”

Right, as Ye-Eun specialized in sure-kill attacks, Sophie probably had a lot to learn by sparring with her. For example, protecting vital areas, feeling killing intent and dodging and the like. Though, I couldn’t really say out loud with Ye-Eun making such a happy-go-lucky face.

“Why is Shin here? To spar with Ren-ssi?”

“Oh, that reminds me. I wanted to ask when I first saw him. His ears... are they real?”

“Yeah. He’s a beastman. Other continents have all sorts of different races. Ren, say hel... Huu.”

Sophie’s words reminded me to properly introduce them to each other. When I looked back, however, I saw Ren who was fidgeting in front of two girls he’d never talked to before. He really was completely stiff. I slapped his back to bring his consciousness back.

“Ren, snap out of it.”

“I can’t, Crown Prince. They’re both too beautiful, I can’t look at them! Plus, t-their clothes are too revealing!”

“It’s okay, Ren. Unlike you, they don’t really mind it that much. Try to man up.”

“That’s a bit hurtful, but regardless, it’s too much for me!”

Really, not even teenagers would be like him. I sighed. Then, a question suddenly popped into my head.

“Isn’t Lebuik just as beautiful as the two of them? Isn’t Ren really casual around Lebuik? Why is that?”

“T-That’s because I’ve known Lebuik ever since I was little... She’s not someone I can see as a woman.”

Did he just drop the bomb...?

“Of course, Lebuik is also very beautiful. Her popularity among the knights was through the roof, and there were endless streams of proposals flowing in from every country in Panan. She had elegance and beauty, and she even had a kind personality. When I was young, I looked up to her too. However, that’s it. Lebuik is my Master and someone akin to my mother. I don’t see her as a woman.”

“Ah...”

If Lebuik heard about this, it wasn't going to end pretty! Though I found it quite funny, when I imagined how dejected Lebuik would be when she found out, a sigh naturally came out. Sophie's and Ye-Eun's expressions also became rigid as they instantly realized the circumstance.

“L-Lebuik is the cat-eared unni, right?”

“Can't see her as a woman? Then he has to be...”

“Whoa, hold it there. You can't impose your beliefs on others. Let me deal with this.”

When I cut them off, they widened their eyes and looked at me.

“Can't impose our beliefs?”

“What are you trying to do, friend?”

“Mm, I can't impose anything on him, but I can help him change his mind. Usually, by beating him up.”

“Isn't that the same thing!?”

I just had to make him miss Lebuik. I just had to beat him up

until he wanted to cry in Lebuik's embrace! I looked back at Ren and smiled.

“Alright, we're done with the introductions. Let's start, Ren.”

“C-Crown Prince, aren't you more spirited than before? Did I do something wrong?”

“No, nothing at all. Ren isn't wrong. Once the thrashing phase is over, everyone will be happier.”

“Something did go wrong!”

Ye-Eun and Sophie, who were done with their sparring for the day, sat down nearby. It seemed the phrase, ‘thrashing phase,’ had interested them. Realizing this, Ren's ears perked up and sweat began to appear on his face.

“Ha, hahaha. Really, Crown Prince. Are you trying to beat me like a dog in front of these beautiful ladies?”

“Ren, how can you say that? I'm not beating you like a dog. I'm just thrashing you for your own sake.”

“That's the same thing!”

“Now now, let's begin.”

“Uwuuuuuuuk!”

For the next 30 minutes, Ren and I both squeezed out our power as Heroes and clashed. While Ren wore a full set of armor and equipped himself with a wooden sword, I only had a wooden spear without any armor. Though it looked like I was lacking in terms of defense, as my armor was in its bracelet form and my spear in its choker form, although I wasn't affected by their attack and defense, I was still affected by their additional effects.

My stats were already miles ahead of Ren. With the additional effects from my items added on top of my superior martial arts, there was no way for Ren to defeat me. Not even if he was Hero!

“Crown Prince is too strong! Too strong I tell you!”

“You only just found out? Don't think about running away, come at me! Come on, hurry!”

“Kuk... Kuaaaang!”

“Having a wild nature isn't bad, but we're doing this because you can't control yourself!”

“Kuak!”

I mercilessly smacked Ren's back with the wooden spear. Immediately afterward, I smacked him three more times.

“Ku...!”

“Are you going to sleep? Counterattack!”

“Even without Crown Prince saying that I was about to do it! Kuak!”

Hearing Ren’s pitiful cries, Sophie and Ye-Eun, who were still watching from the side, added.

“Wow, he really just beat him up for 30 minutes straight.”

“Shin is so cool!”

“Crown Priiiiince!”

“You have more strength in your sword, but you’re still wide open! Didn’t you learn anything from Lebuik!?”

“Kuhuk!”

30 minutes wasn’t enough to expend Ren’s stamina. We were both vastly different than when we met on the 20th floor. As such, I beat him up for 2 hours more. My goal was to help Ren hone his bestial instincts while maintaining his sanity. If he could respond rationally even while in his wild mode, Ren could be a powerful warrior.

“Kuaaaaang, kak!”

“Just because you open your mouth while you run, the enemy won’t let you bite him!”

Of course, he was still far from that point.

Author’s note:

Ren, you can do it! Just endure the beating for now!

Chapter 203. Second Season (6)

Four days after the thrashing phase began, with Ren finally reaching the 60th floor, I decided to fight the 60th Floor Master with him. Since I had to grind the Floor Master anyway, if I brought Ren in, I could save Party Member Scarecrows and train Ren at the same time. It was killing two birds with one stone! Of course, I didn't forget to tell Ren about 'Ten Times a Day, You Monster...' and help him buy them.

Though Ren was a bit lacking in qualifications, it seemed that staying as the last explorer in his world while protecting children earned him some favors. More importantly, as he had become a Hero, he could buy 'Ten Times a Day, You Monster...' more easily.

"... Why didn't you change this thing's name yet!?"

"You'll get bad luck if you change the name of a finalized product!"

"Don't lie!"

"It's true! Though the product is still relatively new, so it might be okay... But Eleine said I can't change its name even if I died! She said something about it being a revolutionary name that was hard to come by... I wonder, is there a special language spirit in it? But it's rare for there to be a language spirit I don't know of..."

Wait, did Loretta not realize the euphemism behind this name!? This small yet not so small difference between Eleine and Loretta...

It almost made me cry. Seeing Loretta tilting her head, I lightly patted her head.

“Loretta, I’m happy that Loretta is Loretta. Don’t change... At least, don’t change when I’m not watching.”

“W-What!? Even if you say something so sweet, I won’t give you anything! Ehehe... Here, here.”

Though that was what she said, she flapped her ears as if to fly away and picked up items like potions, entrance tickets, and Party Member Scarecrows and put them in my hands. I was worried she might be fired from her administrative guild master position at this rate. Or maybe, Loretta wanted that to happen.

Then, when I was organizing the handful of items I got from Loretta with mixed feelings, Ren asked me.

“Crown Prince, there’s something I want to ask.”

“What is it, Ren?”

“Can you help me understand what’s so strange about this ‘Ten Times a Day, You Monster...’?”

I paused with my hand still in my inventory and fell silent. Ren’s ears perked up, seeming to say, ‘I’m listening, Teacher!’ Looking at his innocent face, I spoke seriously.

“... That’s not something to brag about, Ren. It’s really not! I mean, it’s not something people who understand can brag about either, but... Damn it!”

“C-Calm down, Crown Prince! Uwuuuuuk!’

With Ren with me, the already quick Floor Master battles ended even quicker. We each just had to hit it once or twice and it was over. After using Frozen Roar to increase our abilities for 5 minutes, we defeated the Floor Master twice. Although it would’ve been nice if we could use Ren’s Golden Lion’s Roar, he said it was only usable when he was using Deific Manifestation. Considering how powerful the skill was, it was understandable.

“He is my ancestor, the Golden Lion. It really is an honor. Though, I never understood why he came to me instead of my Father who was the Hero.”

“Wait, ancestor?”

“According to the legend, he was blessed by the gods and had the ability to transform into a Golden Lion in battle. With the body of a beast and rationality of a human, he ruled over the continent as the strongest warrior. My unsightly display was because I couldn’t accept his power completely. It’s really quite embarrassing.”

As I didn’t know how to respond, I simply nodded and urged him.

“Then let’s continue with our fun thrashing time so Ren can wield his power better.”

“Crown Prince is... evil! But sorry, I have to go make food for the kids.”

“Eh?”

Right! Ren wasn’t alone. Along with Lebuik, he had to take care of the livelihoods of seven children. I nodded feeling awkward.

“G-Go ahead. I’ll see you later then, Ren.”

“Do you want to come also? I’m going crazy because Elfa keeps crying, saying that she wants to see Crown Prince. She won’t stop talking about Crown Prince.”

“Mm, later. I’ll bring presents.”

“Hm, okay. I’ll tell Elfa that Crown Prince will come by within 4 days.”

“Eh? Wait, Ren!”

Ren left the dungeon before I could stop him. Damn, he got me. Now that things turned out like this, Elfa would hate me if I didn’t come visit within 4 days. After telling myself that I’d reward Ren

with thrashing full of love, I headed back to the guild house.

“Daddy!”

“Ina.”

The moment I entered the guild house, Ina ran into my embrace. Although she could fly if she wanted, she still liked to run as it was a habit from before she got her ability. Since she likely ran into her parents’ arms when they were alive, it made sense.

“I heard you were working hard.”

“Un! I worked hard and became Gold rank!”

In other words, she had broken through the 50th floor. I knew she was climbing fast, but I didn’t think she’d be this fast. I also realized that the freezing energy she was giving off had gotten stronger. I softly stroked Ina’s white hair and spoke.

“Looks like Ina’s going to catch up to Daddy soon. Good job, it must have been hard.”

“Not at all. It was fun! I can handle ice better now!”

Right. All of Ina’s abilities received support from the dungeon’s system. It wouldn’t be wrong to say that Ina received the most benefits from the dungeon’s skill system. If she continued to work

hard, she would be able to come in contact with ordinary people without fear of hurting them. Right, she just had to put in a bit more effort.

Thinking about the day she would become independent, I hugged Ina tightly and rubbed my cheek against hers.

“Thank you for working hard, Ina.”

“Un. Thank you too, Daddy.”

With us treating each other like real father and daughter, I felt like she had really become my daughter. Even though that wasn't possible, it was as if I was putting myself under a hypnosis.

In truth, I was a bit surprised at first when Ina called me Daddy, but now, I didn't think it was so bad. Ina had gone through many hardships and had lost many things dear to her. If I had something she wanted, I was more than happy to give it to her.

“I'll try harder. I'll get stronger and protect Daddy.”

“... Is that what Mommy said?”

“Un. Ina and Mommy will protect Daddy.”

Hwaya, this girl, is she planning on making me a princess? I swore revenge and told Ina.

“Don’t push yourself. Daddy will be sad if Ina gets hurt. Got it?”

“Un. Mommy, Ina, and Daddy can then be happy together!”

Though her words made me happy, Hwaya and I weren’t real husband and wife, and I had to make Ina realize it one day. Thinking about how she’d react, a sigh naturally came out. Of course, this was a matter for the far future. Since it was unclear whether our future was secure, it would be too overzealous on my part to be worrying about this at the moment. As such, I simply held Ina tighter without any words.

Then, I handed Ina off to Hwaya and went back into the guild house with a final look. Ren would arrive soon. I had to prepare myself to beat... to train him.

Just like that, a week had passed since the start of the thrashing phase.

“You’re wide open!”

“Kuk, I knew you’d attack there!”

“Purposefully showing an opening and drawing in your opponent is an excellent tactic, but don’t forget, there are people who can easily see through something so basic!”

“I won’t lose! Kuaaaang!”

An important element in a fight between two people was seeing a few moves ahead of the opponent. If one could predict how the other person would move, it became much easier to achieve victory. Of course, even if one could read the other person, if he was lacking in speed and power to deal a fatal blow, it was useless.

“Kuhuk!”

My wooden spear hit Ren’s vital point, causing him to fall. As he had gone through a thrashing phase before, he could control himself to a certain extent. However, once his beast-like instinct showed signs of appearing, it was easy to provoke him and cause it to explode. I sighed. Then, just as I reached my hand out to help Ren up, I realized that there were people watching us.

“What’s everyone doing?”

“Isn’t it obvious? We’re watching you fight.”

“Beating him... to death? If he dies, tell me. Golden Lion, good undead material.”

“I won’t die!”

No matter how much Ren respected Daisy, it seemed he didn’t want to work under her as a undead. Ren gritted his teeth and took up his stance again.

“Come, Crown Prince!”

“If you’re so worked up, it’s going to end quicker than the last round.”

“I’ll show you that’s false!”

Of course, after that, Ren ended up being knocked down in just 35 seconds. Other than little problems like this, the thrashing phase was progressing smoothly.

However, not everything could work out so well and there were things that had to be taken care of no matter how painful it was. Around the time the 60th Floor Master grinding was ending, Hwaya gave the suggestion.

“It’s about time to let everyone know.”

“About the dungeon?”

“And about us and the danger, Earth is facing. It’s time. Our guild is in the right position.”

At her words, I remembered something from what felt like a long time ago. When we first spoke, she said she wanted to create an organization of dungeon explorers to solve the danger Earth was facing. The organization she talked about then wasn’t too different

from Revival. If there was, it was who the guild master was. Interestingly enough, I did say that I'd accept her offer if I became the organization's leader.

“Revival's members are all strong. As we are now, we won't lose to any external influence, be it Freedom Wing, Guardian, or countries. More importantly, we can't let people continue to do stupid things. The world could potentially end, and there are way too many people wasting military strength and fattening up monsters' bellies for short-term profits.”

“You're right. We only have 23 months left too.”

This wasn't new. I had considered the matter long before Hwaya mentioned it. However, there were too many obstacles to do so at the moment.

“Will they believe us? It seems a bit absurd.”

“What the world is going through is already absurd. What we're about to add isn't going to make it any more absurd.”

“You have a good point.”

“There's power behind the words of the strong. Of course, there's responsibility behind it as well. And you, you are the world's strongest. The Untouchable.”

“Stop, that makes me cringe.”

This wasn't something only Hwaya and I could talk about. We immediately gathered everyone at the guild house and carefully discussed the details. Once we revealed the existence of the dungeon, the biggest problem would be appointing the explorer. There would undoubtedly be millions of people wanting to become explorers. Among them would undoubtedly be powerful influential people.

“We have to set a requirement. It'll be near impossible to control every single explorer. What we need is a large number of powerful explorers.”

“Right, let's not make all new explorers join Revival. Revival is a select group of the most powerful elites. The requirement to be an explorer will first be one's brains, then one's strength and potential for growth.”

“Un. Our goal has to be increasing the number of explorers. At least for this part, we have to make sure to use Soul Contracts to control them. We can't let them waste explorer appointments on people that don't meet the requirements.”

For now, we decided to ban non-ability users from becoming explorers. Of course, it was still entirely possible that there might be ordinary people with extraordinary talent. I was like that initially. However, the chance of too small. It was overwhelmingly better to appoint someone with an ability. That way, they would surely become stronger and increase the number of explorers.

“The contract we’re going to make people sign is also important.”

“We have to give up what we need to give up. We can’t force them to throw away their lives when the world’s enemy comes, and we can’t force them to climb the dungeon 12 hours a day.”

“We can just choose ability users that are already actively fighting monsters. People’s personalities don’t change that easily.”

“Someone like France’s Laz Michel, huh.”

“We’ll only require two things. First, purposefully not climbing the dungeon will be prohibited. Second, the explorers they appoint will have to be approved by us. Just this will increase the number of explorers on Earth and help us reach our goals.”

“Edward, if that’s the case, it’ll be better to put it details numbers for the first clause. We need to make sure that people don’t feel like we’re controlling them while making sure that they don’t neglect their duties as dungeon explorers.”

While everyone was busy climbing the dungeon and training, they still made time to help with the contract and discuss how to tell the world about it. Yua was extremely happy that she was included in this talk.

“If I didn’t become an explorer, I would have never known about such an important talk. Ehehe, I’m happy I can be of help, Oppa.”

“You’re always helpful, Yua.”

“Oppa...!”

“Hold it!”

Ludia quickly put her hands between Yua and me. How dare she misunderstand the love between an Oppa and his younger sister!

Anyhow, the contract went through several revisions and discussions before it was finalized. Meanwhile, I finished grinding the 60th Floor Master with 15 point increase to both magic and charm; killed the Thunder Power Knight, Beyond’s Floor Master that was the combination of the Dark Ratman and Lizard Knight; as if that wasn’t enough, I broke through the First Dungeon’s 61st floor, Beyond’s 11th floor, 62nd, 12th, 63rd, and 13th. This all happened in just 2 weeks.

By the time I began climbing the First Dungeon’s 64th floor, the contract was finished. As Revival’s master and explorer of the First Dungeon and Beyond, I stood in front of the whole world.

“We only have 2 years left. We have to protect Earth. We can’t waste our time on useless things!”

The days when people scrambled to stop the onslaught of sudden monsters was long over. It was now time for us to make our appearance.

“If you’re confident in your strength as an ability user, knock on Revival’s doors at any time. The dungeon will help you become an excellent warrior that can sweep through the monsters and dungeons invading our world!”

Starting from now, humanity will strike back. All ability users will sweep away monsters invading Earth from a different perspective. The war between humanity and monsters, the second season had only just begun.

Chapter 204. The Qualification Of An Explorer (1)

Though I had somewhat expected it, with Revival's accomplishments in the previous incident, my influence had reached an unimaginable realm. Just by saying that there was an important announcement, everything fell into place without having to borrow Hwaya's power.

“Leon, it's me.”

[Friend! What's up? Did a new Event Dungeon appear?]

As we couldn't leave Leon out of such an important announcement, we called him as well. We then explained what our plan was and what we wanted him to do after the announcement. In other words, he didn't have to hide that he was an explorer anymore and he could make other people into explorers as long as they met our two conditions and signed the contract.

Unexpected, after thinking about it for a bit, Leon flew to Korea. The reason he gave was rather interesting.

“If I can make American ability users into explorers, that means they'll become part of America's strength. Since the government already knows I'm in contact with you, it's only obvious that I join you in cutting the start line! I'm already a dungeon explorer, it wouldn't be right to hide in the shadows!”

“Ha, you really are passionate, Leon. Thanks.”

“You know me well, Dude!”

The dungeon was a huge secret. Since we were hiding it all this time, people would undoubtedly criticize us for it. I, of course, had the confidence not to be bothered by it, but Leon seemed to think that it would have been cowardly to not include himself. Of course, we welcomed him with open arms. With Leon also being there, even more, people began to focus on this announcement.

Ren and Lebuik were enough to provide proof that other worlds existed, but to better explain the danger facing Earth, we decided to include one of the beastman children we saved. After a small deathmatch among the children, Elfa was chosen.

Wait, there’s something wrong with the way the Elfa was chosen. They didn’t need to be so passionate about this! Also, Elfa, I didn’t know you were so strong! You might be able to start climbing the dungeon now!

I only said one of them had to come with me, and Elfa folded her rabbit ears and quickly knocked everyone else down in just 2 seconds. Then, as she wiped the blood off of her legs, she asked with a cheerful smile.

“Do I go and sit on Oppa’s lap?”

“No!”

Ina, who was already in my arms, shouted.

“That’s my place!”

“Eeek, I hate you!”

“I hate you too!”

Ina and Elfa growled at each other with their heads almost touching. Elfa would undoubtedly freeze if Ina made a mistake, so I was rather surprised at Ina’s consideration. Mm, I was sure they would become great friends in the future. Yep. I just hoped Ina wouldn’t freeze Elfa in an argument.

The day after, everyone stood in front of the whole world together. Hundreds of reporters gathered at the large press conference I held, and the flurry of flashes was even starting to annoy me.

Although I was in the spotlight, as I wanted to divert the atten... or rather, as I wanted to emphasize the entire Revival and not just me, I had everyone present. Leon was also in one of the seats. As for Ina, Hwaya was holding onto her on her lap. Elfa, on the other hand, was being held by Lebuik under the reasoning that the guild master would lose his dignity with little girls by his side.

After seeing that everyone was present, I held the mic up to my mouth.

“Dozens of years before Two Moon, the dungeon was already there. No one knows who made the dungeon or how it is being maintained. One thing we know for sure is that it exists. My father and a few others worked as explorers. Though, we only started progressing after obtaining our abilities after Two Moon.”

“So you’re trying to say that you can enter this... dungeon that’s connected to other worlds? And that you can grow your abilities there?”

“We, of course, have ways to prove our claims. Three of the members here, Ren, Lebuik, and Elfa are residents of another world. Currently, their world has been taken over by a race called El Patiz, which are similar to the monsters that are invading Earth. I obtained the ability to travel to other worlds through the dungeon and saved Ren, Elfa, and other children who aren’t currently here.”

“What do you mean by taken over?”

As expected, they were interested in the Panan continent. When I was about to speak, Elfa shouted.

“They eat brains! Then they pretend to be that person! They ate Uruto too, and even the Hero!”

“... The same thing happened across their entire continent. Ordinary people were either killed or eaten by the El Patiz, and it was the same for monsters and animals that made up the

ecosystem. Although dungeon explorers tried to stop them, it was too late. In the end, Ren and Lebuik here had to flee to our world.”

The press conference hall became silent. It was probably hard to imagine monsters that ate people’s brains. However, there was someone who broke the silence and asked a question.

“But where’s the proof? No, there’s another problem before that. These people with animals ears, aren’t they monsters?”

“They’re residents of another world who just look different than us. They had intelligence equaling humans, and more importantly, they fight against monsters just like us. Do you plan to treat everyone who looks different as enemies?”

“Shuna and I are also residents of another world. Shin save us from this world’s enemy, the Demon Lord.”

Ludia spoke out. Although she wasn’t from Earth, because she looked like a Caucasian, there wasn’t a way to prove that she was from another world. That was why we had brought Ren, Lebuik, and Elfa, who clearly had non-human features.

“The people from my world fought against the Demon Lord and his Demon Army for a long time. We were defeated only recently. Shin obtained a skill called Dimensional Travel and came to save me. I regret that you can’t see the state of my world. If you could, I wonder if you’ll be able to see Mana Stones as a mere source of energy.”

“Demon Lord? Demons?”

“There isn’t just one world’s enemy. Both the Demon Lord and the El Patiz are among them. In other words, several worlds are being invaded at the same time by different or possibly the same forces. As for Earth, it hasn’t been that long since the invasion began. But we can’t relax because of that. After the Demon Lord conquered the Luka continent, he immediately began to invade another world, and our world was unlucky enough to be chosen. Our world is currently being attacked by two forces. Their joint invasion loosens and widens the path leading to our world, accelerating the invasion process. That’s why we have only 2 years left.”

“What you just talked about, is that related to you? Could you have caused this disastrous result of being invaded by two forces by going to help that girl?”

As I had wondered about this too, I couldn’t blame the reporter for asking. Even after I got an answer from Loretta, I still had doubts. However, if my doubts were true, that would mean one of two things. I had either made a fatal mistake by becoming a Dimensional Mercenary as a Hero or the dungeon, which had helped me grow stronger all this time, was actually the mastermind behind everything. As either were absurd and annoying to think about, I could only believe that it was a mere coincidence that the Demon Lord’s next target was us.

“If that is the question, you have to first question whether the dungeon is our ally or foe. Though even I cannot be sure, if that were true, then there really wouldn’t be anything trustworthy. Of

course, it's your choice whether to believe this or not. Regardless, there is bound to be someone who is in need of the dungeon's help. If you can believe us, hear us out."

I then told them the conditions of becoming a dungeon explorer.

"If you can fulfill the three conditions I just mentioned, the rest of Revival and I are more than ready to accept you as a new explorer. I will make this clear. We have no intention of controlling you. You only have to fight against monsters where you are comfortable. As for the world's enemies, I will defeat them."

"Why haven't you told anyone about such an important matter until now? If you told us about explorers earlier, it would have easier to develop them!"

"Was it so that you could monopolize power? If it's as you say, being a dungeon explorer is a privilege! Isn't obeying you the only way to become one!? This is an absolute supremacy in modern society!"

I wasn't fazed by such strikes. When the hall began to get noisy, Ina became annoyed and attempted to emit freezing energy. Of course, Hwaya immediately stopped and dissuaded her. Right, we couldn't resort to violence.

However, if their voices got louder, and they started talking about taking the right to appoint dungeon explorers, things would become extremely annoying. There wouldn't have been a meaning

to releasing this information.

I breathed in lightly. I closed my eyes, then opened them back up. Immediately, the atmosphere slightly changed. Soon, it changed a lot.

What I did was simple. I released Succubus' Pupils, Spirit of the Tamer, and other skills that increased charm, which I had been suppressing until now. At the same time, I increased Overwhelm's power to its peak. Finally, I put just enough strength in my Evil Eyes so that they wouldn't petrify ordinary people.

Charm was related to how one's appearance influenced others. When I released my charm and used Overwhelm together, the result was even better. While emanating both charm and fear, I slowly looked around.

“Uk.”

“My god.”

“Is that... a human being?”

“His eyes are glowing gold.”

I slowly spoke.

“Developing dungeon explorers? Sure, that sounds good.

Increasing the number of explorers and the power of humanity. That's excellent, it's exactly what I want.

Unfortunately, such a thing wasn't so easy to accomplish. If everyone knew right from wrong, would there be wars? Murders? Crimes? Historically, humans had always rushed to their demise.

“That would have been true if governments, groups, and individuals' greed wasn't involved. If Revival wasn't so strong, would you have listened to us so calmly? No, you would have tried to control us to your bidding. The world's crisis? I doubt you would have even listened. Monster remains, gates, Mana Stones! The benefits wouldn't have been limited to just these!”

The hall became completely silent.

“That's why we needed power. To make everyone listen to us, we had to grow our strengths. Now, we're ready to talk and you're ready to listen. Can you ignore what we're saying now? If we didn't have the strength to back up our claims, would you have paid attention to us?”

“... How can you prove that you aren't like that?”

The man sitting in the front asked with clear articulation. It was France's SS ranker, Laz Michel. Though it was rather unexpected, it was understandable at the same time. He had certainly said so. That he'd wait for the day I tell him everything. Now that the time had come, he had flown to Korea to personally find out.

“Everything you said is right. There’s no need to even speak of all the wrongs committed by humans. However, what you’re saying only holds weight if your group is different than the other powerful groups. I want to ask. Are you confident in not placing your personal benefits over others’ benefits? Will you be able to grant the qualification to become a dungeon explorer fairly? Will you not control them for your goals?”

They were all good questions. But if there was anyone that could answer his questions honorably, it would be me.

“I already have everything I want. Political authority? I’m not interested. Plus, if I really wanted political authority, I could easily achieve it without having to deal with this dungeon explorer qualification. After all, I’m already the strongest in the world, and I even have enough money to fill the entire ocean with gold. I have many great friends and loving parents, and the world’s most beautiful sister and daughter.”

“D-Daughter?”

While the audience stirred, Ina, puffed out her chest proudly, while Yua hid her face slightly embarrassed. Mm, they really were cute.

“Michel, there’s no one on Earth that can provide me with something I can’t achieve myself. So why would I prioritize someone over another? People who idolize me? I don’t need them. I hate people like that the most. This is something you should all remember. If you want to become a dungeon explorer, show your real self. If you think we don’t have methods of telling, I can only

call you foolish.”

My Evil Eyes shined with greater brilliance and dyed the entire hall in light. Seeing as how Daisy’s eyes were sparkling, she seemed to have understood that I was talking about her. Or perhaps, she was just thinking about what we were going to eat for dinner.

“As I said, we only have three conditions. Having the ability to climb the dungeon steadily, not using the authority to appoint other dungeon explorers without approval, and not harming others by using your power recklessly. Although we have ways of ensuring that these conditions are met, it is strictly a precautionary method. We do not mean to control you in any way. We will, of course, tell you about these technical details before you can become a dungeon explorer. Simply put, you will be under a special contract.”

“So anyone can become a dungeon explorer?”

“Anyone who doesn’t violate our conditions has the qualification to become a dungeon explorer. We are only trying to limit the appointment of new explorers because we cannot allow unvetted, weak, or evil-minded people. As I said before, we do not mean to control or manage you in any way. You can fight for your country, your family, or yourself in your own place, in your own method.”

“Mmm...”

“This contract will bind both of our souls. If you still have doubts, I can even add a clause preventing me from interfering in

cases where the three conditions are still met. Anyone who violates this contract will have their soul taken.”

Michel stared at me fixedly on his seat. It seemed he had said what he wanted to say and planned to watch me for now. Of course, other than Michel, no one could challenge the effect of my Overwhelm.

“I’ll say it again. We only have 2 years left. We must put aside humanity’s advancement for now and raise our spears and swords against the monsters. Otherwise, rather than advancing, humanity will end up deteriorating, even becoming extinct.”

“Extinct, you say...”

“Revival and all ability users exist precisely to prevent such a thing from happening. If you want to fight against the monsters on the front lines, contact us. We will help you.”

The press conference ended. The entire world saw and heard me. The truth behind monsters and the existence of the dungeon were revealed to the world. We were now ready to sprint forward without hesitation.

Chapter 205. The Qualification Of An Explorer (2)

The day we made our announcement, we received endless crude attacks from the press. Some denounced us, saying that what we said about other worlds, explorers, and world's enemies was all made up, while some criticized us for monopolizing what should have been shared among all of humanity. Some also claimed that the dungeon was an enemy no different than the monsters, and that Revival was their vanguard. The sheer stupidity in that claim made us speechless.

When exposed to something they couldn't understand, people easily denied or dismissed it as false. They wouldn't be convinced unless the world's enemy showed themselves in front of them. Although we showed them how the inventory worked and even showed ourselves going in and out of the dungeon, in the end, it wasn't easy to accept the existence of the dungeon unless they personally saw it.

However, there still were people ready to adapt and progress. These were the people who applied to become explorers. Not to mention, there were more than just a small number.

Hwaya glanced over the computer screen and spoke with a smile.

“Shin, we're being flooded with applications. I wouldn't be surprised if there are over a million.”

On TV, there were reports denouncing our claims as make-

believe and untrustworthy. It was truly laughable. I retorted with a chuckle.

“We already decided anyways. The applicants we accept have to be at least S rank. That’s the best way for the explorer count will gain momentum.”

“I know. Out of all the applicants, only 5 people meet that requirement. Still, so many people applied!”

With that, Hwaya pressed a button and wiped the list clean. Immediately afterwards, the printer started spewing out five applications. She came over to hand them to me, but realizing that my hands were full, she made a wry smile and spread her arms out.

“Ina, come to Mommy.”

“Un.”

Ina, who was in my embrace, made a small nod and went over to Hwaya. Although I couldn’t compare her to my 9 year old self who was busy brandishing a wooden spear in the Amazon jungle, Ina liked to act spoiled too much. It was most likely because she lost her parents at a young age. Though I was happy to spoil her, as I couldn’t let her become a spoiled teenager, I’d have to fix her man... manners...

‘No, but it’s cute, so it’s fine. Ina’s smart, so I’m sure she’ll fix it on her own when she grows up! Once she gets a boyfriend, I’ll

kill... I mean, she'll distance herself from Mommy and Daddy.'

"Hm? There are two SS rankers? I recognize Laz Michel, but... who's this woman?"

"She's a Turkish ability user that recently became a SS ranker. I think she had a healing ability."

"Healing ability?"

Became a SS ranker? Doesn't that mean her ability evolved? Feeling a bit surprised, I looked at her profile page. She was rather young and quite beautiful. Although I expected her to be brown, she looked Caucasian. Apparently, most Turkish people were like that. Mm, Turkish, how pretty.

"Shiin?"

"N-Nothing. I was just wondering why all high-ranking ability users were so beautiful, like you and Ina."

"And this woman?"

"Y-You're more beautiful of course!"

"I'll take it for now, but I'm confiscating this. Ina."

“Un!”

At Hwaya’s command, Ina reached out and took the application from my hand. The two of them then began to give their impression of the healing ability user.

“What, she’s not even that pretty. Her skin isn’t that white, her eyes aren’t that big, her nose isn’t that high, and her breasts aren’t that big!”

“Her clothes are worn. I don’t like her earrings. Her hair is old-fashioned.’

“I don’t like how she looks so naïve! She’s short, too! Ina, who’s prettier? This woman or Mommy?”

“Mommy is a lot prettier!”

“Ina is beautiful too!”

“Like I said, you’re both beautiful...”

I took my eyes off the two who were rubbing their cheeks against each other and examined the other four profiles. I first looked at Laz Michel’s. His ability being reevaluated to SS+ rank was especially eye-catching.

“He wants to join Revival? Hwaya.”

“I’m okay with it. That oldie has manners and is sensible. Who knows, maybe he can give us advice when things aren’t going well.”

“I’m okay with it too, but we should talk to everyone about it first. Let’s make him our first contractor. He’s an SS ranker, and if he joins Revival, we’ll gain credibility.”

“Her too.”

“Who?”

Hwaya lightly eyed Ina, and she handed me the paper she had crumpled up. It was the Turkish healer’s application.

“She wants to join Revival.”

“Eh? Turkey will let her go?”

“It’s not like you have to abandon your country to join Revival. She can just join us for Event Dungeons or Event Raids as part of Revival without being tied to her country.”

“It’s the same thing if she can’t prioritize her country. Of course, I’ll prioritize helping the countries of Revival’s members, but... Ah, I see.”

She had a healing ability. In other words, even if she was an SS ranker, she had no ways to attack. Not everyone could be like Ludia who could both attack, buff, and heal by coming to Earth and receiving the power of earth.

“Interesting.” I murmured and curled the corner of my mouth up.

“With her joining Revival, Turkey can borrow our strength for Event Dungeons or Event Raids they can’t handle. That’s quite smart.”

Her name was Ilayda Van. She was 26 this year, a university graduate, and an active ability user. Apparently, her ability was still growing. She was quite outstanding.

Of course, Revival already had an excellent healer, Ludia. However, it didn’t hurt to have another healer, especially a high-ranking one. Who knew? Maybe there were some things only she could do.

“If she’s joining us for her country, she might not feel as committed... but I’m sure she’ll do her share of work. Alright, let’s accept her.”

“Hm, Daddy’s being smart for once. Right, Ina?”

“Daddy’s always smart!”

“Ina’s the only one that knows me. Come here.”

“Un!”

I decided to look at the remaining applications later, and received Ina from Hwaya’s arms. Ina laughed innocently as she played with my cheeks. She really was cute. I became more certain that I didn’t need to fix her manners.

Ina was important, of course, but I didn’t delay the explorers because of her. If we were going to accept the two SS rankers today, we wouldn’t have time for others.

As we decided to accept Laz Michel and Ilayda Van as Revival’s members, we had to see them in person. Without me having to do anything, Hwaya was already calling them. She truly was a reliable vice-guild master.

At that moment, a woman’s voice rang out from behind.

“Oh, this is the perfect family. I’m surprised you haven’t had your wedding yet.”

“Mom! Don’t come out of nowhere!”

Hwaya, who was in the middle of calling someone, dropped her phone and screamed. The woman that appeared in the living room ignored Hwaya and put the plate of fruits she was holding onto the table with a bright smile. She looked like how Hwaya would look

in 10 years. Although her beauty and youth made it seem as if she was only in her early 30's, she was undoubtedly Hwaya's mother.

“So, Son, when's the wedding?”

“Um... Mother, you see...”

Didn't I explain when I first met her!? The questions from Hwaya's mother, Lana, made me sweat. When Hwaya suggested that it was rude not saying hello when I left Ina with her all the time, I agreed and came to visit Hwaya's home. However, I didn't think Hwaya's mother would like asking so many tough questions.

“My, with how you appeared on TV, I thought you were full of experience, but you're quite innocent. I didn't know this was your type, Hwaya. Didn't you like guys that played around when you went to school?”

“Mom!”

“My, look at you getting all mad. Ina's going to learn bad things, right, Ina?”

“Mommy is nice. She's just being shy.”

“Aw, siding with Mommy?”

I smiled and patted Ina. Hwaya seemed to have given up on

calling, as she sent text messages somewhere, then sat down next to me.

“You said you’d make lunch for us, right? Hurry up. We have to go soon.”

“Tell me, what do you like about Son-in-law? Between Allen and him, who would you choose?”

“Mom, stop!”

“But my daughter is dating the world’s most famous man, I’m jealous! How can I not!?”

Devil, there’s a devil here...! I hugged Ina and shuddered. Unlike her gentle appearance, Hwaya’s mother loved joking. I told myself to remember it at all costs.

After eating the excellent Korean food she cooked for us, I circulated Peruta Circuit and warmed up my body. When I got up, Hwaya who was playing with Ina tilted her head and asked.

“Where are you going, Shin? We have to meet them in two hours.”

“Two hours is enough to climb the 64th floor. I’ll be right back.”

“You only need two hours to climb a floor? ... Are you really

human?”

“I’ve been wondering about that recently, but it looks like I’m human. There are still people stronger than me in the dungeon.”

“Well, you’re only level 64... Huh, nevermind. Also, I should be able to enter the First Dungeon in a few days too. I’m at the end of the 79th floor now.”

Although Hwaya spoke like it was nothing, it was a truly outstanding achievement. When she became a First Dungeon explorer... though she would become weaker for now, she would be able to become much stronger in the long-run. She would also get the opportunity to become a Beyond explorer.

“Congrats, Hwaya. Good job.”

“Once I defeat the First Dungeon’s 50th Floor Master and obtain Dimensional Travel, I won’t need to send you off to other worlds alone anymore.”

“Right... Were you thinking about that the whole time?”

“Hmph, I have to watch out for Daisy too. Right now, she’s the only one that can follow you to Dimensional Mercenary missions. It makes me jealous.”

“If Daisy’s interested in me, it’s probably just my corpse, so don’t worry.”

“That makes it sound like I’m worried that someone will steal you from me! I might be jealous, but I never even considered you being stolen by someone! Got it?”

I nodded with a wry smile at Hwaya’s temperamental shout. Really, I had to at least praise her heaven-piercing confidence.

Suddenly, Hwaya lowered her voice and spoke quietly.

“A-Also... what Mom said before... Allen is just a friend I used to know when I was a kid, so don’t worry. T-There’s really nothing more.”

“Yeah, I know she was just joking. I don’t mind.”

I thought I gave a 10 out of 10 reply, but Hwaya frowned and shouted as if I said something unpleasant.

“... You should mind it at least a little! How can you not care at all when another guy’s name came up?”

“Do you want me to mind it or not!?”

Really, women were as annoying as they were lovable!

Chapter 206. The Qualification of an Explorer (3)

From the 61st floor, bat type monsters started to appear. Although the dungeon never made sense in terms of what monsters showed up, bats were still completely outside of my expectation. I certainly couldn't be blamed for thinking that they'd just be too weak.

Of course, they weren't the small bats found on Earth. They were giant bats with blade-like claws and razor-sharp wings that shot out auras. Their high agility and attack power made them more difficult than I imagined.

From the 63rd floor, blood-sucking bats appeared. As they constantly tried to stab their fangs between my armor gaps, I grew more and more irritated. If I could meet their eyes, I was confident I could petrify them. Unfortunately, unless I used Divine Speed, they could move faster than I could turn my head.

In most situations, I just used Sharana's power and cut the ones blocking my path as I rushed forward. That said, when they shot blade-like auras or tried to bite my neck, I couldn't help but flinch slightly. Though I looked down on them, thinking that the dungeon had run out of its repertoire, that wasn't it at all. In fact, it was much harder than the 59th floor, which had both golems and mimics.

Regardless, the First Dungeon was no longer a place that could make me invest more than a few hours. By now, I realized that I had long surpassed the standard of the First Dungeon. Although it

wasn't a walk in the park, it was still smooth-sailing. If I were troubled by this much, I would be too embarrassed to raise my head in front of my guild members.

Unlike the bats, Giant Ghouls, which started appearing from Beyond's 11th floor, were powerful and tough, albeit extremely slow. As a result, I ended up fighting agile enemies in the First Dungeon, and slow and tough enemies in Beyond. With Giant Ghouls using Diehard when their HP got low, I learned to estimate my opponent's remaining HP and to deal an instant-kill final blow.

However, when I reached Beyond's 13th floor after sailing through the First Dungeon and Beyond's previous floors, I finally ran into a troublesome situation. A countless number of Skeleton Knights had appeared on top of their skeleton mounts. On the 30th floor, they had commanded their skeleton armies rather than showing off their own strength. In Beyond, however, they were obviously different. When there was only one knight, he would lead the army as its commander, but when there was a swarm of knights, their destructive power would become their main force.

[Kill the living human!]

[Destroy his brain and burst his heart!]

[Kuooooooooo!]

[Charge! Charge! Lead him to death!]

The army of Skeleton Knights wiped all traces of smiles off my face. When they used Undead Roar, which decreased all living being's speed to 5%, I was helpless. I could only be thankful that Undead Roar didn't stack like Orc Lord's Warcry. I didn't even want to imagine what my speed is like decreased further.

[Human, give me your head!]

“Like I will! Divine Speed!”

When Undead Roar hit me, there were only three things I could do. First, I could use Divine Speed to recover my speed to half, then dodge their charges. Second, I could use Dragon Skin and endure their attacks for the duration. Third, I could use Frozen Roar to nullify Undead Roar.

Once I got used to them, I learned to shoot bolts imbued with explosive magic to prevent them from screaming. Sharana, Ruyue, and Peika also helped to shut them up. Without Undead Roar, the Skeleton Knights weren't so terrible.

What was more dreadful was the special field property of Beyond's 13th floor. When I dodged the Skeleton Knights' charge, they continued all the way until they hit the wall. The moment they collided, however, they split into two. In other words, when they charged toward me, I had to face them directly. Otherwise, they only grew in numbers. Just out of curiosity, I tried colliding into the wall too. As expected, I didn't split, and only my nose hurt.

As I said before, I was able to break through Beyond's 13th floor within 4 days. Although I almost died a few times, as I had already gotten used to such situations, I didn't flinch at all.

But when I thought about it more seriously, dying even once in Beyond meant that I would be throwing away a month's worth of time. With how close Earth was to ruin, I couldn't help but shudder at the thought.

With the 13th floor being how it was, I was worried what combination of Giant Ghouls and Skeleton Knights would greet me on the 14th floor. Of course, before that, breaking through the First Dungeon's 64th floor was first.

Loretta repeatedly told me to be extra careful on the 64th floor, but I knew she was worrying about me too much recently. It seemed she hasn't fully understood my capabilities yet.

As I had the confidence to instantly cut down bats that were twice as strong as the ones on the 63rd floor, I brushed aside her worries and climbed up to the 64th floor.

That happened last night. Today, I planned on fully breaking through the 64th floor along with Lotte.

“Whew, let's get these bat level over with and go greet the new members... Eh?”

The 64th floor had a completely different atmosphere than the

63rd floor. More specifically, the pathway was narrower and even the color seemed different. It was the type of grim atmosphere that made one's heart thump.

“I can't calm down.”

Lotte, who was in her human form, expressed her displeasure. With a bitter smile, I replied.

“It looks like this place is causing some mental status effect. I guess it isn't too strange. It's the First Dungeon after all.”

“Hero, I can't stay here any longer.”

Although I thought Lotte could easily endure feeling slightly uncomfortable, Lotte reacted strongly. Her cheeks were flushed.

“What's wrong, Lotte? Are you okay?”

“Hero, don't come close. Rather, take me to the Residential Area, no, the resort area now.”

“Y-Yeah, got it.”

“Hurry. If I stay here any longer, I'll end up pouncing on Hero.”

“What? Is it a magic that causes hostility between allies? Damn,

it's a trap for parties! Let's hurry back!"

I grabbed Lotte's arm to take her to the Residential Area. However, in the next moment, she took hold of my other arm. With a feeling of uneasiness sweeping over me, I looked up. Lotte's pupils were slightly loose.

"I can't hold on any longer, Hero. Forgive me."

"Forgive you? For what...?"

"Female wyverns become three times stronger when they're mating... Be careful so that your bones don't break."

"Mating!?"

The moment I heard that word, I acted extremely swiftly. I immediately used Divine Speed, grabbed Lotte, and rushed to the resort area. Afterwards, in case the effect still lingered, I put her down and distanced myself. All these had only taken three seconds.

"Huh? H-Hero?"

"Lotte, are you okay?"

Lotte looked around with a blank expression as if she'd just woken up from sleep. As she looked okay, I started walking up to

her. Once Lotte saw me, she nodded in relief and spoke.

“I’m fine, so let’s hurry back to the dungeon, Hero.”

“You’re not fine at all!”

I immediately halted and went back about a hundred steps. Lotte smacked her lips as if it was a shame.

“If I wasn’t afraid of monsters that would attack us when we let our guard down, I would have done it there.”

“I’m a human, and you’re a wyvern!”

“What are you talking about, Hero? No matter what seed I accept, I can give birth to a wyvern, so don’t worry.”

“That makes me worry even more!”

“But I chose Hero and abandoned all wyverns. So Hero has to take responsibility and guarantee that I leave behind my offspring.”

“Let’s talk about this later, okay!?”

It seemed I needed to find a strong and cool male wyvern. I threw Lotte in the resort area and quickly returned to the dungeon. Of

course, I didn't forget to run back to the 63rd Floor Shop and flick Loretta's forehead.

“You should have told me there was a trap like this!”

Loretta rubbed her forehead and retorted as if she'd been wronged.

“But it's normally forbidden for us to say anything about the next floor! It's the customers' responsibility to check if there are new items in the Floor Shop and to prepare for the next floor! Because I've been favoring Shin-nim recently, other administrative guild masters are watching with their eyes open... It's not like I wanted to put Shin-nim's chastity at risk!”

Loretta was tearing up. Now that she mentioned it, she was right. It was just that I had gotten too used to Loretta taking care of me on her own. I'd forgotten to do what explorers were supposed to do.

It was my fault. I lowered my head.

“Sorry, it's all my fault. I've just been too used to Loretta taking care of me. I'll be sure to check things over at the Floor Shops from now. And if Loretta wants a reward for all the trouble I caused...”

Loretta immediately rejoiced, as she silently shifted her hair and push her cheeks toward me. Her long ears were happily flapping as if they were doing jumping ropes. Loretta sure was cute.

After giving her a reward, I climbed back up to the 64th floor after obtaining all necessary information. It turned out that the 64th floor had succubi. I immediately remembered the Blood Succubus that had almost killed me.

The moment I stepped into the 64th floor, there was an attempted charm magic. Immediately afterward, more succubi arrived, using charm magic while displaying their alluring bodies. It seemed Lotte and I escaped last time before they managed to come.

“Handsome human.”

“Come to me.”

“Such brilliant mana light. What a lovable human.”

Of course, with Absolute Soul, neither the floor’s charming property nor the succubi’s magic could affect me. If they did work, the extent would only be making them look slightly more attractive. In other words, I didn’t need charm resistance items at all. I didn’t need to bring Lotte here in the first place.

That said, the succubi on the 64th floor weren’t as weak as Blood Succubus. When they realized their charm had no effect, they attacked me in various ways. They could use strong status effect magic and had a passive magic that absorbed their enemy’s mana and health. They were skilled in elemental magic, and could even attack physically with their nails that elongated.

“Charm doesn’t work!”

“Let’s take him by force!”

“As if I’ll let you!”

In the past, I would have had trouble with a group of highly intelligent enemies attacking me. No matter how good my armor was or how strong my attacks were, I couldn’t beat dozens or hundreds of enemies without being hurt.

However, that was in the past.

“Look at my eyes!”

“Kyaak, his eyes...!”

“The Evil Eyes...!”

The succubi all turned to stone. The Evil Eyes of Petrification were finally showing their strength! The 56th through 60th floor had monsters that didn’t have eyes, so I couldn’t use them well. In Beyond, they could only slow down the Giant Ghouls or Skeleton Knights. I was happy to finally see Evil Eyes doing so well.

Though I had to pour mana into the Evil Eyes to break through the succubi’s high mana resistance, that wasn’t a problem at all.

Once the succubi turned into stone, they easily crumbled with a single crossbow bolt.

As I charged through the 64th floor like a tank, I petrified all succubi and shattered them. Regardless of what they tried, they were all useless!

“Come here, girls!”

“Kyaaaak!”

“Everyone run! That man is a rose bearing poison!”

“COME!”

[You used Provoke! All enemies attack you reluctantly!]

“M-My body is acting on its own!”

“No!”

As more and more succubi screamed unable to resist me, I began to feel weird. It was almost as if I was the bad guy...

“Well, I’m sure I’m just imagining it.”

Just like that, I broke through the 64th floor in 40 minutes.

When I asked Father later, he said he continuously recited the army's Buddhist heart sutra and broke through in 4 days. As I hadn't gone to the army to learn the Buddhist heart sutra, I was glad that I had the Evil Eyes.

Author's note:

The 60th Floor Master's skill will have a chance to appear soon
^^

Chapter 207. The Qualification of an Explorer (4)

With Beyond's 14th floor in front of me, I left the dungeon and joined Hwaya to greet Ilayda Van and Laz Michel. Though we gained much attention, neither Hwaya nor me cared much for it.

"I bought a building in Seoul to use as our guild house."

"That's a good idea. We can't only meet at the Residential Area after all. By the way, where's Ina?"

"In the dungeon. Kids have to go out and play after eating."

"Makes sense."

51st floor was where giant monsters appeared, and they were nowhere close enough to threatening Ina. I became a bit sad, thinking my daughter might surpass me, but that was my fate as a Beyond explorer. No, perhaps, Ina might enter Beyond too! With her skills, she could certainly get a god's true name and meet the requirements!

"We're here."

"... Here?"

"We're overflowing with money anyways."

Unlike the houses we saw on our way here, in front of us was a huge and modern mansion. It was as if someone had bought the nearby land, tore down the old buildings, and built a new one. Although we were in a quiet residential area, the center of traffic was only 10 minutes away. A land like this must have cost an astronomical... No, let's stop there.

The building seemed to be made from Poison Wax Bee's saliva and Blue Stone Golem's mana-rich body parts. With these materials, ordinary explosions and monster attacks wasn't able to shake the building in the slightest. It also had a garden. While it wasn't big compared to the size of the building, it was still big enough for Ina to run around and play.

When I was looking at the entrance to the mansion with a stupefied expression, Hwaya muttered with a hint of playfulness.

“It's part of my dowry.”

“Pfft!?”

“I'm kidding, geez.”

“I can't laugh at your jokes lately!”

“Let's go in.”

There were already guests in the mansion. Leon, Sumire, Sophie, Ren, Lebuik, and other members of Revival were all present. It wasn't that strange since we had our press conference only yesterday and no one had a reason to leave Korea. After greeting them, I finally realized.

“Oh, I see. Are we having a welcoming party for the new members? That's why everyone's here, right?”

“Yep. I was about to tell you about it, but you just rushed into the dungeon.”

We could have done it at our guild house in the dungeon, so why on Earth? Seeing my curious gaze, Hwaya responded with a grin.

“It's to show off a bit. We're currently in the world's center of attention, so we should emphasize us all being together in one place. Marianne's Garden is nice, but people won't know what we're doing or where we are.”

“You're right. Today is a day to celebrate the guild's expansion, but showing off our appearance might be just as important.”

It seemed they weren't the only ones here. As proof, Elfa flew into my embrace. Yua then popped out from behind her and quickly dragged her back. From how swiftly she moved, I could tell how much Yua grew. My sister was growing unbeknownst to me...!

“Laz Michel and Ilayda Van are going to arrive soon. Stop making

that stupid face and get ready to greet out guests.”

“Right.”

While other members were busy preparing for the welcoming party, Father and Walker were drinking without helping out. I could see Yua chastising him even from where I was standing. Oh, it seemed Leon had joined them too. Right, Leon liked drinking too... Really, Ren was the only proper man here.

“I know you want to join them, but stop fidgeting so much.”

“Sorry...”

I wasn’t a proper man either...

When we finished setting everything up including the two Soul Contracts and finished checking over everything, we heard knocks on the door.

“Shin-nim, Unni, they’re here.”

“Let them in.”

Although we would order outsiders around for external affairs, we decided not to let outsiders handle any internal affairs. As such, Sumire was working as Hwaya’s secretary. Although it was fine for now, as the number of explorers grew, we would have to deal with

outside organizations. We needed to find a solution.

In any case, Sumire opened the door, and two people came inside the reception room. The first one to enter was Turkey's healing ability user, Ilayda Van. She looked like she was the same age as Hwaya. At the same time, she was shorter than Hwaya, had smaller breasts, and had smaller eyes. Regardless, she had good style and looked like an innocent beauty.

The second to enter was Laz Michel, who I had gotten somewhat used to seeing by now. When he saw me, he raised his hand and greeted me.

“Nice to see you again.”

“It's only been a day. Did you stay in Seoul?”

“Yep. The hotels here are quite nice.”

Sumire then led them to their seats. This was our first time meeting Ilayda Van. Although I thought about greeting her to create a more relaxing atmosphere, I decided to leave that to Hwaya, who was sitting next to me with her eyes on fire.

After greeting the two important guests, I handed them the contracts.

“I assume you already know about Revival's purpose. Joining Revival means that you will join us in our fight against the world's

enemies. Is that fine with the both of you?”

In truth, when I first created Revival, I only thought about fighting them on my own. The only reason Revival was created was to give Ludia and Shuna a place to stay. But after the Event Dungeons we cleared together, I thought that it would be best for Earth’s explorers to come together. That was when Revival was truly created.

Now that we were together, we had but one goal. It was to fight the world’s enemies. We knew the reason for the dungeon’s existence and the reason for monsters appearing on Earth. We had to fight, not for anyone else, but for ourselves, our families, and our friends.

As for Daisy, Ren, and Lebuik, they were cooperating with us to save their own worlds. It went without saying that they were just as desperate as the rest of Revival’s members.

Laz Michel nodded resolutely.

“I wouldn’t have come otherwise. I decided to put my trust in you, so it’s only obvious that I lend you my strength. The world’s enemy... Two of them, you said. If we have to fight such terrifying foes soon, we’ll have to hurry.”

“It’s the same for me. The Turkish government also agrees with me. If my ability can help protect our world, I would be happy to contribute.”

Ilayda Van spoke with a clear voice as she stared straight into my eyes. Hwaya pushed her face next to mine and made a threatening hiss, but I pushed her face away slightly. Are you a snake?

“Great. Read over the contract and sign it. Once that’s done, you’ll be a member of Revival.”

As Ina had become a Gold rank explorer recently, Ilayda Van and Laz Michel became First Dungeon explorers using her appointments.

For the record, I had used my appointments for Ye-Eun and Ina, so I didn’t have any left. As for Hwaya, she was still in the Second Dungeon. It would be a waste to make SS rankers into Second Dungeon explorers only. Leon? Leon would surely climb the Second Dungeon as if his life was on the line.

Once the contract was signed and Ina appointed them as explorers, I reached my hand out to Laz Michel.

“I’m looking forward to working with you, Michel. With this, you won’t be able to run away.”

“I’m looking forward to working with you too, Shin. You won’t regret taking me in.”

Of course, Hwaya was in charge of Ilayda Van. As they say, a monarch only walks on royal road. There was no need to take a single step in a place that was clearly filled with mines!

“It doesn’t really feel real yet. I’ll have to see this dungeon for myself.”

“I feel the same way. You said we should climb together, right?”

It was impossible to climb the dungeon with just a healing ability. As such, we told her to climb the dungeon with Michel. Of course, we didn’t forget to tell Michel to fight Floor Masters on his own first before challenging them together. That way, he’ll be able to get the solo kill titles.

More importantly...

“Ah, wait. You guys must be dying to go, but wait a bit longer. We have a welcoming party planned for our new members, you see.”

It was understandable that they’d want to jump right into the dungeon, but the party we planned painstakingly would then be ruined. Though, this party would most likely end up devolving to a drinking party...

“I love parties!”

“Hm, you’re right. I see some faces I haven’t seen before, so I guess I should take some time to get to know them.”

They seemed interested as well. I smiled and got up from my seat. Just when I was trying to act cool, Ina jumped on my back and ruined everything. Ilayda Van asked with widened eyes.

“Did you two know each other from before?”

“She’s my daughter.”

“Daughter!?”

Seeing me answer without any hesitation, Hwaya gave me a thumbs up. I understood from her reaction. Once I said I had a daughter, I could stop other women from making advances on me!

“Ooh, melting tuna!”

Right, today’s main dish was the melting tuna. Yua had already taken everything I had left of the giant melting tuna this morning. Tuna sashimi, tuna steak, tuna salad... Father, Walker, and Leon were already digging in impatiently, but there was nothing to worry about as we had enough to fill the bellies of 30 more people.

“Great, I love sashimi!”

“Oh, you know what you’re talking about. How old are you by the way?”

Father, who quickly grew close with whoever shared his love for

food and alcohol, approached Laz Michel with a smile.

“Ajusshi!”

Hwaya suddenly shouted and snatched the soju bottle away from Father’s hand.

“How can you start drinking when everyone isn’t here yet! Your son is the main host too!”

“Y-You almost ruptured my eardrums, Daughter.”

“Didn’t I tell you to act with poise in official settings? You can’t make the guild master look bad!”

“I know, but this could hardly be called an official...”

“Then were you planning on undermining Shin’s authority in front of the new members? If you go too far, I’ll tell Mrs. Kang!”

“Huk!”

Father instantly flinched back. After subjugating Father, Hwaya gave Walker and Leon a terrifying glare. Like a slug that had been peppered with salt, the two of them shrunk back. After that, Hwaya slammed the soju bottle down on the table and spoke.

“The party starts now! Everyone, give the new members a round of applause!”

“Unni is really energetic..”

“W-What a cool woman...”

Hwaya instantly gained control over the somewhat disordered atmosphere and whipped it to shape. Everyone began clapping as to not provoke Hwaya’s wrath. The claps then became more natural and everyone greeted Michel and Van. The two of them also greeted each of Revival’s members.

“I don’t know much about the dungeon. Please take good care of me.”

“I’ll try my best to be of help to everyone. It’s a pleasure to work with you.”

“Alright, Shin, it’s time for your opening address.”

It seemed Hwaya was a bit worked up. I put down Ina who was hanging by my neck, took up the soju bottle like a mic and spoke.

“As I said before, today we received two new members – Laz Michel, a body-reinforcement ability user, and the healer Ilayda Van, who will protect everyone along with Ludia.”

“Healer...”

Ludia looked at Van with a slightly surprised expression.

“I’m sure we have our own reasons for joining Revival. However, we have the same purpose. That is to protect the place we belong.”

I put the soju bottle down on the table lightly.

“It’s only the beginning. With what happened yesterday, more changes will come and we will be in the center of it all. I’m sure we’ll get busy almost to the point of death, but we’ll surely gain something from it.”

“That’s enough, Crown Prince.”

“I like your honesty, Son.”

“I’m happy with being able to help Oppa.”

“... Trustworthy. Guild master, pass.”

That was enough of seriousness. I grinned and took up the soju bottle again. Everyone’s gazes fell on the bottle.

“Then for today, let’s drink! Forget welcoming party, let’s drink when we can! Cheers!”

“Whoooooooo!”

“Cheers!”

“Shin! My preparations!”

“Mommy, can I drink too?”

“No, Ina!”

That day, no one could enter the dungeon sober.

Chapter 208. The Qualification of an Explorer (5)

The next day, Revival's members returned to where they belonged. Leon returned to America, Sophie returned to Britain, and Michel returned to France. However, Sumire and Van said they would remain in Korea.

“I want to stay and help Unni more. Also, I want to more seriously learn martial arts from Shin-nim.”

“But Sumire...”

“Take good care of me!”

Apparently, Sumire was living by herself as both her parents passed away. As such, there was no problem deciding where she would stay. As people from her country practically worshipped her, it seemed she was somewhat reluctant to go back.

As for Ilayda Van, I was genuinely surprised that she wanted to remain in Korea. After all, Turkey was certain to have problems where her power could be of help. At our reaction, she spoke as she nodded her head.

“When I left Turkey, I already told them that I would not be coming back. Since I'll have to focus on climbing the dungeon, I won't have time to deal with other affairs.”

“Mmm.”

“Please accept me. I’ll serve you faithfully.’

“No, you don’t need to serve me at all...”

It was then decided that she would be living in our guild house mansion. We would need someone to stay here after all. After we saw Ilayda Van enter the dungeon after contacting Laz Michel, we each went back to our work. I, of course, had to continue what I left off yesterday – choosing new explorers.

Then, when I was looking at the documents Hwaya printed that included new applications since yesterday, someone sat down next to me. Thinking it was Elfa, I turned my head to the side. There, I saw Ludia.

“Ludia?”

“You know how you... picked a new healing ability user.”

“Yeah, didn’t I tell you about it?”

“I was in the dungeon, so I didn’t hear you well. Um, you know Shin...”

A hint of uneasiness lingered on Ludia’s eyes. I looked at Hwaya. She shrugged, gesturing that she didn’t know what was going on.

“What’s up?”

“I’m doing my best. I’ll be Gold rank soon too. B-Because you said not to stick to you so much, I’m stopping myself from going in your room. Because you said not to fight, I’m not doing anything even with more girls joining in. So don’t throw me away, aak!”

After flicking her forehead once, I did it three more times. Ludia looked at me with teary eyes.

“You hit me!”

“I’ll hit you more if you keep saying stupid things. Throw you away? Do you think you’re trash? It’s better to have two healers than one. You at least know what $1 + 1$ is right?”

“Then you won’t throw me awa... Ow!”

“What am I going to do with this girl.”

I thought she had gotten better since she had stopped being reliant on me physically, but it seemed that wasn’t the case. As I sighed, Hwaya spoke instead of Ludia.

“Ludia’s just worried that she’s not being of help to you.”

At Hwaya words, Ludia glared at her with malice.

“What do you know?”

“We like the same guy. Isn’t that enough to know each other?”

“I... I don’t like him! I just can’t live without Shin...”

“Yeah, yeah. If you want to say something, you can say it over a drink later. If you stay here, it’s going to hinder our work, so leave.”

“Eek, Hwaya Mastiford!”

Hwaya’s telekinetic magic slowly pushed Ludia out of the room. Ludia tried to use her power, but she soon suppressed it, seemingly afraid that she’d destroy the mansion. In the end, she was chased out as she screamed. Ye-Eun, Walker, Yua, Father, and others who were peeking in were also pushed out like bowling pins by Hwaya’s magic power. I didn’t know why they were watching us so curiously. To lighten up the awkward atmosphere, I purposely laughed aloud.

“Hahaha, it’s great that everyone’s so merry!”

“Go back to work, Guild Master.”

“Yes, Ma’am.”

That day, we chose four new explorers. They were all S+ ranks, and as we thought that they had potential, we made them all First Dungeon explorers.

Although we were slowly using up our appointments, with the four new explorers working hard, we would be able to recover them soon. It was also why we prioritized picking high ranked explorers.

Once we met them and had them sign the contracts, I finally found the time to enter the dungeon again. Beyond's 14th floor. It was hell where Giant Ghouls and Skeleton Knights appeared together.

[Human... Your delicious smell is tickling my nose!]

[Cut him to shreds! Kill all living be— Kuhuk!]

The moment I ran into them, I crazily shot my crossbow bolts. Peika and Ruyue were floating around me. Sharana was currently infused into my body.

“Stop the Skeleton Knight! Prevent them from opening their mouths!”

[That's easy!]

[Leave it to me, Shin!]

Ruyue's freezing energy filled the area, while Peika's lightning quickly ravaged our enemies. At the same time, I charged through all the enemies and shot my bolts crazily. The target was the Skeleton Knights' skulls and the skeleton mounts' legs! It would be my victory as long as I could stop their screams and charge.

[Humaaaaaaan!]

“Elemental Blade!”

[N-No! I got on aga... Uuuk!]

[Whee~]

Countless number of elementals flooded toward me, and I swung the spear blade that had extended beyond 10 meters, instantly severing the legs of the skeleton mounts running toward me. Critical hits broke out, and with Skull Breaker's effect, the damage extended to their entire bodies. I didn't even need to describe what happened to the Skeleton Knights riding on them.

[Guoooooooooooo!]

At that moment, a Giant Ghoul roared and swung its claws, as if to protect the Skeleton Knight squadron that had lost its formation. I boldly jumped into the fray and shouted.

“Ruyue!”

[Winter Curtain!]

The Giant Ghoul’s claws were slowed by the numerous ice crystals fluttering in the air. I smirked and jumped on top of its arm. I compressed the Elemental Blade and instantly re-expended it to penetrate the Giant Ghoul’s head. However, an undead monster wouldn’t die from just having its head pierced.

“If you want to win against me, you’ll need to come by the hundreds!”

In the next moment, I jumped off the arm and slashed down with my spear. After splitting its head into two, the Elemental Blade continued down to its body, causing an explosion. Before Diehard could even activate, I had crushed it.

The Giant Ghoul’s corpse disappeared, and I could once again see the Skeleton Knights that had readied themselves to charge forward once again. Giant Ghouls as defense, Skeleton Knights as offense. It made sense.

“Unfortunately, that’s not enough! Wind King’s Rage!”

Before they could charge toward me, I charged toward them first. Though they raised their heads to use Undead Roar, Peika and Ruyue didn’t let that happen. Both ice and lightning were specialized in stopping the enemies’ movements. With the two of

them working together, not even Skeleton Knights could anything about it.

“Haaaap!”

The first Skeleton Knight I ran into made a silent scream as it was sent flying. This was only the beginning. As they had been preparing to charge together, they were all grouped. Since I couldn't use Wind King's Rage for three hours once it was fully charged, I had to kill as many of them as I could.

“Come! I'll crush you all!”

[You used Provoke! All enemies attack you uncontrollably!]

[Kuaaaaaaaaa!]

[Kill him! Kill him!]

“Divine Speed!”

When they raised their weapons, I used Divine Speed. It went without saying that the faster I was, the more damage I dealt. One, two, three... Each time a Skeleton Knight was sent flying, the speed they flew and the distance they covered increased. All the skeleton mounts had already become dust.

This continued until not a single one of them remained with

their feet on the ground. As I had been pushing them to a single spot, they were all piled on top of each other.

[Powerful... human...!]

[How? It's only a single human...!]

“If I wasn't strong, would I be here?”

There were over 40 Skeleton Knights clumped together. I could tell how many Skeleton Knights were filling up a single passageway. The power of wind and lightning gathered by Wind King's Rage was ready to go berserk. I charged into the mountain of bones made of Skeleton Knights and let it explode.

“Hasta la vista!”

[Critical Hit!]

They were thoroughly annihilated.

“Huu, huu...”

They turned to particles of light and scattered into the air, brightening up the slightly dark passageway. I stabbed my spear into the ground to catch my breath. I had managed to finish them without being hit a single time.

“Huu... That was easier than I thought!”

[I did well, right?]

[Huhu, how was it, Master?]

“You guys are the best.”

I smiled and complimented the two elementals that flew next to me. Without their help in stopping the Skeleton Knights from using Undead Roar, it would have been difficult for me to defeat them. However, I had an effective way of stopping them from using Undead Roar. With that, I had no problem getting through this area.

The key was preventing them from using Undead Roar and crushing the skeleton mounts' legs. Just with these, their strength would practically be halved. Although the Giant Ghouls acting as their shields were annoying, Beyond's 14th floor was more or less a breeze. I was looking forward to who was waiting for me on the 15th floor.

“Ghoul plus skeleton. Isn't that just a ghoul with bones?”

I laughed, imagining a monster that easily tripped on its own bones. Of course, when I thought about the Thunder Power Knight that appeared on the 10th floor, I knew that probably wouldn't be the case.

“Hopefully, another skill of that type drops. It feels a bit lacking to use Skill Synthesis with just two skills...”

I thought about the skills I received from Beyond’s 10th floor boss and the First Dungeon’s 60th Floor Master and smirked. I was a bit worried that I had gotten too addicted to Skill Synthesis, but I couldn’t help looking forward to the outcome. I raised the spear back up as I felt full of strength once more.

“Let’s go, guys! We’re going to breeze through it!”

I successfully broke through Beyond 14th floor in just two days. Just by being full of fighting spirit, a person could do so much! When I left Beyond and returned to Earth, marveling at the infinite potential of humans, Hwaya gave me a report.

“Two explorers... died.”

Humans really did have infinite potential.

Chapter 209. The Qualification of an Explorer (6)

As I had just taken off my shirt to go take a shower, I looked back at Hwaya in an awkward state.

“What!? Why did they suddenly die?”

“They were contracted to me.”

“Contract? You mean...”

I asked her, dumbfounded.

“You mean they died because they went against the contract?”

“Yeah. I put my familiars on the rankers we took in. As you see...”

“You can put familiars on them without being discovered?”

“I got some help from dungeon items. It’s not like the dungeon only has battle-related items.”

‘Sorry, I only got battle-related items...’ While I murmured inwardly, Hwaya’s finger danced in the air, and took out a small ball from her inventory. It was then that I suddenly remembered

something.

“Why are you in my room?”

“Your mom let me in. By the way, you’re not really engaged to Ludia, right? She was cooking in the kitchen.”

“Don’t ask that while you’re making fireballs. The answer is no. Also, stop staring at me like it’s normal.”

“What? Didn’t you build your body to show off to girls? It’s not like you’re losing anything by showing me some muscles.”

“I naturally became like this while training!”

I hurriedly summoned Ruyue and cleaned myself of sweat and dust. While I was at it, I put on fresh clothes as well. Although I didn’t like cleaning myself like this, as taking a shower was more refreshing, I couldn’t stay topless with Hwaya staring at me.

Hwaya smacked her lips seeing me put on my clothes. She then fiddled with the ball she took out, making it enlarge to the size of a soccer ball. In it, we could see a video. It was like a magical crystal ball.

“It’s just a device that links to familiars’ eyes. I can just link my eyes to theirs, but I don’t like it because it makes me dizzy.”

“And I won’t be able to see it either.”

In the crystal ball, one of the new explorers we chose appeared. He was talking with another person.

“That’s another ranker from his country.”

“So the part of the contract he violated is...”

Everything happened incredibly fast. When the explorer reached out to put his hand on the ranker, strength left his body and he collapsed. The frightened ranker screamed. The view then changed to the other explorer. It was the same with him. They had both met the same death in the same way.

“Because of them, all I got were two items called Soul Crystals. It’s gross, really.”

“I feel you...”

I was dumbfounded. They didn’t believe us even after all that? Did they think the contract was just a piece of paper? I thought we took the necessary care to prevent such a thing from happening so that we could steadily increase the number of explorers... It seemed I didn’t put enough faith in people’s ability to be stupid.

“Huu... If this happens a few more times, Earth’s forces will... Maybe, we should just give up on the Soul Contract.”

“No, Shin.”

Hwaya shook her head.

“We only asked one thing from them. To not make explorers without permission. What do you think they were trying to do by going against us? It’s simple. They were trying to create their own group of dungeon explorers to decrease our power. If we give up on Soul Contracts now, it’s going to become a total mess. Think of how troublesome it’s going to be when hundreds or even thousands of dungeon explorers are going against us. Then, the problem won’t just be saving Earth. Be firm. They simply paid the price.”

Hwaya was right. If they couldn’t keep such a simple condition, it meant they didn’t care about dungeon explorers’ duty in the first place. Even though we explained to them so thoroughly, they were still more concerned with playing Monopoly. To be frank, I was disgusted.

I gritted my teeth and closed my eyes for a moment before opening them back up. Then, I asked Hwaya who was staring at me fixedly.

“Where were they from?”

“Germany and... Britain.”

“From now on, we won’t... Britain?”

I paused for a moment and fell into silence. Hwaya then continued where I left off.

“We won’t choose explorers from Germany or Britain from now on.”

“Wait, Hwaya!”

“I decided within my authority as the vice-guild master.”

“Hey!”

When I burst out, Hwaya pushed her face into mine and said threateningly.

“It’s fine! As long as we take care of the world’s enemies, there won’t be any problem! Or what, are you not satisfied with just this? Are you going to attack Britain?”

“No, that’s not it, but Britain is still the country you were born in. I know you want to protect...”

“I already fulfilled my duty by including them in the first wave of appointments. It’s them who betrayed me. Just do as I say.”

She took the crystal ball again and stuffed it in her inventory. Then, she snorted.

“Let’s go eat now! When you’re angry, you have to fill your belly!”

“Yeah, sure.”

That day, we revealed the video to the world and announced that we wouldn’t take explorers from Germany and Britain. That also meant that explorers we appointed couldn’t appoint new explorers from those countries. With this, people of Germany and Britain couldn’t become dungeon explorers unless they were chosen by the dungeon itself.

Of course, we faced massive protest, as the mass media criticized Revival for “killing” people. Although there were those that supported us, the amount of criticism we received from most countries was almost as if they had already prepared to do so. I was even beginning to suspect that they sacrificed the two explorers to push the narrative that we were criminals.

Regardless, we knew we were in the right. I made an announcement. As it was annoying to hold a press conference every time, I just sent a recording to a broadcast agency.

“We emphasized twice or even thrice that those who violate the contract will die. Now that you see that they actually died, you think we killed them? So you’re saying you planned on violating the contract from the beginning, right? From this point on,

whoever talks bullshit and blames us will receive the same treatment as Germany and Britain. If you're okay with that, keep talking. You won't even see an explorer in your country. Also, Event Dungeons and Event Raids that you won't be able to handle, what do you think we'll do when the so-called giant monsters and gates appear in your countries? We don't have any intention of helping countries that treat us like murderers.”

Once the announcement made its round, all talks to criticism thoroughly disappeared from the mass media. It was a refreshing feeling. Really, we should have threatened them from the beginning.

That said, I couldn't feel good about how things went. Threatening them with Event Dungeons and Event Raids was the worst. I murmured with frustration.

“I don't like it.”

“But they weren't listening to us when we were being nice. Don't worry, I'm sure there are people who think like us. Right now, the people that support us and the people that doesn't like us should be fighting each other.”

“When the Demon Lord is in front of us, do you think they'll realize that what they're doing is useless?”

“The other two S+ rank explorers are doing well, so don't be too sad. It's not like we didn't expect this to happen.”

“Cheer up Daddy!”

Ina jumped into my embrace and buried her head in my chest. Was she trying to comfort me!? It's super-effective! I hugged Ina back.

“Thanks, Ina. I'm fine, I was just feeling a bit annoyed.”

“Are you feeling better now?”

“Yeah, thanks to Ina.”

“... You might be feeling better, but I'm feeling a bit strange.”

Hwaya was looking at Ina and me doubtfully. I looked at Ina and tilted my head.

“No, nevermind... I can't be jealous. She's a kid. I'm an easy-going woman...”

“Mommy is weird.”

“Yeah, Mommy is weird.”

Seeing Hwaya murmuring to herself, Ina and I laughed.

Thanks to Ina, I was able to cheer up. With this incident, I

realized how foolish people could be. If I couldn't resolve things peacefully, I just had to use my strength. After all, I wouldn't have revealed my identity if I didn't have the power to suppress anyone who opposed me.

In the end, we were the ones holding the right to appoint explorers, and it was other countries that needed it. At the same time, Revival had Earth's most powerful people in it. As long as this remained true, others couldn't meddle with our will. We would continually increase the number of explorers for the benefit of our world.

Germany and Britain had also turned their tails, and other countries used this opportunity to push their own ability users to become dungeon explorers. Though I found it disgusting, if they would defeat monsters, we had no choice but to use them.

We then appointed five more explorers. There was no real reason other than that they needed to grow and acquire dungeon explorer appointment rights as soon as possible. I emphasized the danger our world was facing and made sure they saw how the two explorers that went against the contract died.

"I hope that you won't do something so foolish and that you'll do your best for our future."

"Yes, sir!"

"I won't forget it!"

“For Earth!”

“I’ll only believe in you, Revival’s Master.”

After that, I returned to the dungeon. Although the 65th floor’s succubi attempted to seduce me, I easily turned them to stone and shattered them. There were no succubi that could escape my gaze and with Elemental Blade’s reach, my spear plowed through everything in my path.

[Master! Master’s going too fast!]

[Shin is angry.]

[You guys are noisy! You just have to follow Master!]

I tore apart the succubi without a shred of hesitation. In just 30 minutes, I began to see the door to the Floor Master room. At that moment, the door undulated as if it was an illusion, and a strange fanfare rang out in my ear.

[Amazing! You met the condition for opening the Floor Master Event Dungeon that no one has done since the creation of the dungeon!]

[Floor Master Battle Room transforms into an Event Dungeon!]

[SSS rank 1-man Event Dungeon, ‘Succubus’ Castle’, opened! You

cannot refuse to enter, so please be careful! This Event Dungeon is in a dimension partly outside of the dungeon's system's jurisdiction. Death in this dimension means real death. If you feel lacking in strength, it is recommended that you immediately use Return to escape!]

Message noona, you're too kind! Wait, before that, what did you say?

“Even the Floor Master room had a next level!?”

I only realized that on the 65th floor? What a waste!

Chapter 210. The Third Taming (1)

The surrounding scenery began to melt like when entering gates. Before I noticed, I found myself on a sunset hill. In front of me was a Gothic style castle that seemed to pierce the heavens.

The castle's gate then creaked open even though no outside force had touched it. In an instant, the atmosphere changed as the castle seemed to have gotten closer to me. A sweet scent emanated from inside, which seemed capable of enchanting all men. I found that Absolute Soul was already fully activated.

“My mind... seems fine.”

Peruta Circuit was also circulating at its maximum speed. As I was closing in on mastering it, as long as I willed it, Peruta Circuit would activate. Mana raged through my body and solidified my mental defense. At the same time, it covered my body thoroughly, protecting me like a shell. Now, I could imitate Peruta to a certain extent.

“Succubus' Castle... It looks like I need to go in with a firm resolve.”

I prepared myself to use the power of god's true name. With Zeus' power, I could break through most obstacles. Unfortunately, I couldn't use Caduceus yet.

“Sharana, come inside my crossbow. Peika, you come inside me. Ruyue, come into my armor.”

[Got it!]

[Hu, huhuhu.]

[Un!]

Even though I was sucking in the surrounding mana with Peruta Circuit, having all three elementals active still slowly used my mana. However, there was no problem. I could just steal some from the enemies waiting for me inside the castle.

“Let’s go.”

After murmuring to myself, I lightly kicked off the ground and jumped into the castle. A large, luxurious hall entered my sight. There were succubi in formations everywhere I looked.

They all had unique appearances, but were still absolute beauties that could topple kingdoms. Just by glancing at them once, most men would undoubtedly have been enchanted. They were completely different than the succubi I’d seen in the dungeon. However, I couldn’t quite tell what the exact difference was.

The succubi in front of me seemed to have been waiting for me. Their eyes were looking at me like women in love, and their hands were cusped on top of each other politely. Most importantly, they all seemed to be bowing.

... Strange. They weren't in a battle stance.

“We were waiting.”

The doubt in my heart was crushed in an instant.

“Waiting? For who? Me?”

I asked the girl... the succubus. Unlike the other succubi here that were dressed in rather revealing clothing, the one greeted me just now showed little skin. She was wearing a luxurious leather jacket and leather pants. Her bat wings also looked slightly different than the others’.

I instinctively knew that she at least had the strength to make me draw my weapon. When I raised my crossbow and asked, she realized the battle spirit I was emitting and once again lowered her head.

“Please retrieve your hostility. We have no intention or ability to fight you.”

“Yeah, that’s what I thought. This place should be an SSS rank dungeon, but you guys are... too weak.”

“Huhu, so you really were the one she was waiting for. Please follow me. You will be able to enjoy a battle befitting your dignity.”

“She’s the boss of this place?”

“This way.”

I followed the succubus and left the hall. The other succubi lined up against in parallel and... right, they were bowing to me. But why? What was up with these succubi’s ingrained politeness!?

Everything I knew about succubi seemed to escape my head. Did I already fall for their trap? Or was this entire castle an illusion...? No, that didn’t make sense.

“Come inside. The queen is waiting.”

When I snapped out of my thoughts, I was in front of a large door that resembled the Floor Master door. I couldn’t help but ask the succubus that led me here.

“You want me to start with the boss? Do I fight the rest of you after I take care of her?”

“Whatever you wish.”

I couldn’t understand what she was planning. With a hint of doubt, I kicked open the door. Boom! With an explosive sound, the door crumbled down and the scene beyond the door was revealed.

As the castle and door were something out of a movie, I expected to see a red carpet that led to a throne, but that wasn't it. Inside was another large hall and a young girl that was standing with her eyes closed.

Though she had the frail appearance of a young girl, her flowing pink hair glowed, seemingly revealing that she wasn't human. She also had two horns that protruded out to the side and curved like lamb horns. Furthermore, she was wearing a thin see-through dress. Thankfully, I didn't need to look away as she was also wearing silver armor that covered her like a swimsuit.

In terms of appearance, she looked like she was Yua's age. However, as expected of the queen of succubi, she had a pair of voluptuous breasts. It's okay! I believe Yua will grow one day! One day!

She opened her eyes. Starlight gathered in her pink pupils. Seeing her eyes flashing wildly, my mouth twisted into a smile and I resisted her gaze with my own eyes.

This girl had Evil Eyes.

"Truly... a perfect warrior. Is the only thing you want from me a battle?"

As expected, her voice was also young. However, her voice contained a firm authority and strength. As a show of respect for her strength, I answered honestly.

“No, my goal is the reward I’ll get after I defeat you.”

“Then raise your weapon. We can talk afterwards.”

The Succubus Queen spread out her arms. Her silver fingernails elongated and glistened. The moment I saw her provocative smile, I shot dozens of bolts and charged at her with Divine Speed. Through Weapon Swap, the weapon in my hand had already become the Chaotic Spear. Sharana also switched to the spear and strengthened its power.

“Ut!”

“Let’s see if you can continue to act cool!”

While the Succubus Queen created a magical shield to protect herself from the bolts, I ducked under and dug into her defense. I then shot my spear upwards, aiming for her chest area. She seemed to be specialized in magical abilities, as even while blocked the bolts, she summoned dozens of bats to block my path.

As I had expected some form of resistance, I wasn’t caught off guard. My armor shone brilliantly and all the bats dropped down, frozen to chunks of ice. My spear then clashed with the Succubus Queen’s nails, which she hurriedly moved in front of her chest. Although my goal was to pierce through her body, I was surprisingly blocked by her physical resistance.

This was the level of a Floor Master? She was much stronger than

even the monsters in Beyond! Even while I couldn't hide my surprise, I reacted quickly. I instantly took back my spear and thrust forward.

“Heroic Strike!”

“Kuk! You barbaric man!”

What shocked me even more was that the Succubus Queen could follow my movements to a certain extent. This was when I was under the effect of Divine Speed! She created another magical barrier. When it was pierced through by my Heroic Strike, she spread out her wings and blocked the attack with a wave of silver aura.

However, Heroic Strike could not be stopped with just that. My spear perfectly hit her stomach, and the force she couldn't completely block sent her flying back.

“You're strong, but you have no manners... You must not be popular with women.”

“Sorry, but I am.”

I grinned as I retorted. Then, I shot a whirlpool of chaos flames toward her. Frightened, the Succubus Queen flew up. I used Talaria and followed after her.

“You're a Hero!”

“Yep, I am.”

“The blessing on your body! And that recklessness! Truly the role model of Heroes!”

With that, the Succubus Queen drew a magic circle in the air. No, it was not a physical magic circle. It was a magic circle that maximized the power of her Evil Eyes of Charming. I also drew my Evil Eyes’ power to the peak and pulled up the power of Absolute Soul and Overwhelm.

Pzzt! The magic circle crackled with sparks, but soon disappeared. For the first time, the Succubus Queen made a shocked expression.

“You resisted my charm!?”

“You didn’t fall for my petrification, so we’re even!”

I used Divine Speed once again. As I could steal mana when I hit her, I didn’t need to conserve mana. I arrived in front of her in 0.2 seconds, shook off her broken magic circle’s attempt to restrain me in 0.3 seconds, and deal another blow to her leg. By the 1 second mark, I was thrusting my spear consecutively with Lightning Spear Storm.

“Die!”

“You’re an impatient one, aren’t you!?”

The Succubus Queen’s body shone in multiple areas. Magic circles appeared in every spot my spear targeted and made great efforts to block the spear attacks. Even so, my mana was filling up slowly. It meant she was properly taking damage.

“I was waiting for a warrior of this caliber, but I cannot dishonor the name of Succubus Queen!”

In the next moment, she reached out and grabbed my spear. While the aura emanating from her fingernails and the lightning aura enveloping my spear clashed and dyed the room in a brilliant light, her face pushed up against mine. When we were close enough that I could count the number of her eyelash strands, she pushed her full lips against mine.

Realizing what she was about to do, I used Divine Speed for the third time and headbutted her. I then raised my foot and quickly kicked her away.

“Kyak!”

The Succubus Queen teared up. Rather than physical pain, she seemed to have received great psychological shock. She shouted at me.

“You refused my kiss! Are you really a man!? How can you kick a girl like that!?”

“Fight with your strength!”

“This is a Succubus’ strength!”

“Charms don’t work on me!”

I shouted back annoyed as I crashed down on the ground. I had activated Gaia Buster. I had even used Sacrifice as well. The hall crumbled, and the countless number of rock shards that shot up was enveloped with a black aura. With an expression of utter shock, the Succubus Queen created several barriers.

“You!”

“Since you invited me, defeat me with your strength!”

Instead of the crumbled ground, I kicked off the air with Talaria’s power and charged toward her. The brilliant power of Hero filled my spear and mixed with chaos flames, forming a whirlpool that was hard to describe. Facing me, the Succubus Queen spread out her wings. Pink aura enveloped her hands.

“You’re truly manly! But if you don’t differentiate between your targets, you’ll be hated!”

“I prefer being cursed by targets that’ll soon die!”

“I won’t die!”

My spear clashed with the Succubus Queen’s aura, and an explosion broke out. Though we both received damage, I attacked her once again. Her raw strength was similar to mine! However, in terms of technique and skill...!

Peruta Circuit vibrated fiercely, speeding up the rate the whirlpool of aura rotated. As I poured more mana into my attacks, the Succubus Queen received more injuries and more mana flowed back into me. The Succubus Queen widened her eyes in surprise.

“My mana...? We were the same kin?”

“Sorry, but do I look like someone that can seduce women wherever I go? I simply obtained the Mana Eater’s power!”

I shouted and poured more strength into my spear. I used Heroic Strike once more and activated Sacrifice at the same time. If she didn’t die with this, I would be in trouble. However, her intelligence was high and her magical barriers were extremely annoying. The solution was to push through when I saw an opening! Although this wasn’t the strongest attack I could muster, I put enough strength to destroy Seoul in a single blow.

Just when I was about to thrust forward, she smiled and spoke.

“You pass, Dear Husband. In every regard!”

Two words I'd never heard in my lifetime made me lose strength. I couldn't believe my mentality was so weak that I'd be shaken by words. Thinking that I needed to train myself when I got back, I tried to thrust forward once again. This time, she spoke more clearly.

“Since we worked off good sweat, why don't we take some rest and talk, Dear Husband?”

“Don't say something that would make other people misunderstand!”

I couldn't help but interrupt her.

Chapter 211. The Third Taming (2)

Although I was still positioned to stab my spear into her, the Succubus Queen let her defense down. Then, she grabbed my spear and pushed it away.

“Can you take this crude thing away? I only want to be stabbed by Dear Husband’s spear in bed... Kyak!?”

I smacked her head. It should have hurt.

“Don’t make coarse jokes. If you want to talk, let’s talk. I’ll listen.”

“Huu, you’d be perfect if you weren’t so violent. Really, humans... Fine. Let’s go have a nice talk.”

She rubbed the place I hit then snapped her fingers. The succubus that led me here entered through the door with the other succubi and began to tidy up the place quickly. Soon, a table and two chairs had been set up with wine and two glasses. I couldn’t understand what they wanted from me.

Regardless, it was clear that they didn’t want to fight me. Other than Ruyue, I sent the elementals back. With Ruyue’s power, I cleaned myself up and put her on standby in case anything happened. Seeing me clean myself in an instant, the Succubus Queen looked at me with interest.

“Oh? Surprisingly, you’re a man of culture! That magic, no... elemental?”

“Yeah.”

I sat down across from her. She pushed a glass of wine toward me, but I wasn’t stupid enough to drink alcohol in the middle of an enemy’s territory. When I snorted, she spoke a bit depressed.

“At least say a toast.”

“Sure, sure.”

“Mm, good. So, what were we talking about...? Our wedding date?”

“Want to die?”

“It’s a part of it... Fine, I’ll start from the beginning. From the moment I lost against them.”

My ears perked up. I didn’t expect to hear anything important, but who lost to who?

“Have you heard of Elesia?”

“Is that someone’s name?”

“It’s the name of a world. The world we were trying to invade and the world we lost against.”

“Can you be more detailed? Who’s we?”

I pulled the chair I was sitting on closer in to the table. Her Evil Eyes flashed with joy.

“Obviously, I’m talking about the Mare Alliance. The demon continent Enesis’ rulers, the Mares.”

“And what’s Enesis?”

“A continent where the world’s power disappeared. To be precise, it was stolen by Elesia.”

“What? Stolen by Elesia? Didn’t you say you were trying to steal it from Elesia?”

“Eh? You didn’t know about this? ...Do you not know why your world is being invaded?”

I froze. In my head, I struggled to make sense of what she said. First, I organized what I knew about the enemies invading my world.

There was one that became greedy for more world’s powers even

after obtaining one, but I set that one aside for now. Normally, worlds that lost their ‘world’s power’, which allowed them to continue to exist, invaded other worlds to steal their worlds’ powers. Worlds that were being invaded usually had races similar to humans, while the invading side were always demons or monsters.

Until now, I hadn’t really thought about how the invading forces had lost their worlds’ powers. Perhaps, I was avoiding thinking about it as I had never even asked Loretta.

However, what the Succubus Queen just said threw a rock in a still pond. Why Earth was being invaded? The forces of Enesis should have tried to steal Elesia’s power, but Elesia stole Enesis’ power first?

“Your troubled face is so cute. I was wrong. You must be popular with women.”

“Please, explain.”

“Of course, I’ll tell you everything.”

With that, she emptied her glass. I poured more wine in her glass, then picked up my own and gulped it down. No matter what poison was inside it, I felt like I needed to drink it. Of course, the wine had a heavenly taste.

“Do you know how a world is born?”

“No.”

“Huhu, I don’t either. But I know this. There is a definite limit to the number of worlds that can exist. At a certain point in the past, the infinitely growing number of worlds reached that limit.”

“The number of worlds reached... a limit?”

“I’ll give you an example. Let’s say you have a bookshelf that can hold up to 300 books. At first, you bought all the books you could because you wanted to fill up the bookshelf, and before you noticed, it did. But, without realizing that was the case, you bought even more books. What would you do?”

“Buy a new bookshelf?”

“Only one bookshelf can fit in your room.”

“Then I’d sell or throw away the books I don’t read.”

“Exactly. That’s what’s happening to us.”

She clapped as if I’d answered a difficult question.

“The number of worlds became too high, so it needed be lowered. There wasn’t enough worlds’ powers for all worlds to have one. I don’t know who, but the Lofty One came up with a solution.”

To pair up all worlds.

With that, she filled up my glass. I immediately grabbed it, and as she wanted, I clinked glasses with the Succubus Queen.

“Gulp... Huh. Pair up worlds?”

“Yep. It was an excellent way to halve the number of worlds. Just like that, countless number of worlds became paired. Enesis and Elesia was one of them. Between these two worlds, the one with less mana, or in other words, the weaker world became the focus of the world’s power. In a way, it was a way of balancing them out. Everyone knows that defense is easier than offense.”

“You mean... the current system of invaders and defenders was created by someone?”

“Right. Without the world’s power, no world can continue to exist. As a result, one world was left with no choice but to invade and steal the other world’s power. Regardless of whether the defender succeeds or fails, two worlds would decrease to one. With this, the number of worlds would successfully be halved.”

“The hell...”

Didn’t that mean neither side was at fault? After all, the invaders were forced into their positions.

I was dumbfounded. What we were doing until now wasn't a heroic tale of defeating evil monsters nor an adventurous tale of exploring mysterious dungeons. Rather, it was a simple competition for survival.

“Don't be too shaken. It's not like what you have to do changed. You just have to protect what you need to protect. A thief may have needed to steal to survive, but that doesn't change the fact that a thief is a thief.”

“T-Thanks.”

Why was she comforting me? Though I was thankful, I was also a bit confused. Now that I thought about it, wasn't she the one in the invaders' position? Why was she telling me all this?

She seemed to have realized what I was thinking, as she continued her explanation.

“Right, so Enesis invaded Elesia. But, we lost. It lasted hundreds of years. Lord led everyone and all Mares participated. But I fought half-heartedly so that I could protect my clan members. That's why many of us are still alive.”

“If you lost, how are you still alive?”

“Oh? You don't know this either? Isn't it obvious? Look where we are, and you'll know your answer.”

“The dungeon.”

“Right, the dungeon.”

A full smile bloomed on her face.

“In wars, it’s rare that victors completely wipe out the losing side. Of course, Lord and other powerful members had to die, but my clan wasn’t strong enough to catch their attention... That’s when the dungeon stepped in. To give us life.”

“Life?”

“Where do you think all the monsters in the dungeon came from?”

“... Ah.”

I remembered the Lizard Knight and Dullahan I first met. I remembered their voices of despair that I did my best to ignore. The Succubus Queen grinned as she looked at me.

“They were feeling stifled... and crying in despair.”

“Yep. It’s like what those losers said. Monsters, Mares, Demons, and other invaders that didn’t have the courage to die with their worlds joined hands with the dungeon. Eternally dying, yet being unable to die. The cursed immortality.”

“ ... ”

I couldn't say anything, especially because I had somewhat expected it. The dungeon helped us, the defenders. In that case, it was clear how the invaders viewed the dungeon. They undoubtedly hated it to their bones, so much so that they'd give their lives to get back at it. Even so, they joined the dungeon for a chance at life.

“When you succeed in defending your world, the ones that failed will probably join the dungeon. Of course, with their leaders killed. They will then help grow other worlds' defenders. Easy, right?”

“... What about you?”

“Obviously, I'm different. Do I look like the Mares that attacked you in the dungeon? Those Succubi that fell to being mere Floor Masters?”

“No. I haven't seen the Floor Master yet anyways.”

“I refused. To be more precise, I set a condition. I didn't want to live a cruel life where my clan members and I died repeatedly.”

She spread out her arms. The entire castle seemed to be breathing like a living creature.

“I will cooperate. I will help the defenders grow. But, I will only give myself to the one who has the qualification.”

“...”

“Of course, I set a very strict condition. This person had to be a man who was extremely strong, extremely fast, extremely charming, and extremely elegant. Oh, and he had to have extreme resistance against charming. Simply put, it’s you!”

“I’m speechless.”

Dumfounded, I gulped down the glass for the third time. The Succubus Queen pouted.

“What do you mean “speechless”? It makes sense! I was born as a Succubus Queen, but I had to devote my life to battle without ever knowing men. Do you know how depressing that is? I didn’t want to die without finding a husband, but I didn’t want to become a battle machine for the dungeon. Since I was planning on accepting a husband, isn’t it better if he’s fabulous? Most of all, I wanted someone who would love me as I was without falling for my charm! Of course, didn’t really believe a man could resist my charm, but... huhu, I was so surprised when my charm didn’t work even after I amplified it with magic! That’s when I felt fate!”

“You call that fate?”

“It’s the reward I got for waiting for countless years. One time, I

got frightened, thinking I'd die of age in this boring castle. But look, I met you!"

"Who said I'd accept you?"

"Then are you going to kill me? A pitiful beautiful girl like me? You're going to kill someone connected to you by fate? Un? Are you going to massacre me and my clan members who faced extinction just by being born in Enesis?"

"Eek...!"

This girl, she revealed everything on purpose! Just in case I killed everyone! She cupped her hands on her chest, and with tear eyes, she pushed her face up against mine. Her charming face was youthful like a teen's, yet somewhat erotic... First, I flicked her forehead.

"Ow! You hit me again!"

"I'll take you in."

I said shortly. Her expression brightened.

"Really!? I love you!"

"The first thing we did was fight, love my ass! I just didn't want to kill someone who has no hostility against me, especially when I

have a way for her survival.”

“Oh, looks like Dear Husband is rather inexperienced with love. Love isn’t something anyone can explain and comprehend. The moment someone tries to explain love, its value drops.”

Then what, you know love!? I wanted to throw the question back to her, but upon thinking about it, she was the Succubus Queen. As she’d at least know love more than me, I stayed silent.

She got up from her seat, pushed the table aside, then approached me and grabbed my hand. As it was unlikely that she’d try to do something now, I let her be. She happily kissed the back of my hand and looked up to me. Her eyes shone with sparkling pink.

“Dear Husband, vest me a name that connects us together.”

“... Licorice.”

At that moment...

[You made an achievement of taming the SSS+ rank boss monster, ‘Succubus Queen.’ You obtained 3 skill point. Current skill points: 5]

[Taming became level 5. Even without taming, all neutral targets will see you favorably and easily listen to your commands.]

[Spirit of the Tamer became level 5. Your charm stat’s degree

of amplification increases, while your tamed monsters' loyalty and affection increases greatly. Current tamable targets: 3/3]

[Event Dungeon cleared! You were acknowledged by the Succubus Queen and made an achievement of successfully clearing an Event Dungeon without killing. You obtained 10 bonus stats!]

[You became level 66! You obtained the qualification to challenge Beyond's 15th floor!]

Wait, what? Did I hear wrong?

“Then, Dear Husband, please take good care of us. My clan of 214 succubi will forever serve you as our husband.”

“What!?”

I had instantly gotten 214 more mouths to feed.

Chapter 212. The Third Taming (3)

What the Succubus Queen, Licorice, did next was truly shocking. When she slightly lifted up her dress, the 213 succubi in the castle all transformed into bats and flew into her dress. Although the dress was see-through, I couldn't see the bats once they went in!

In utter shock, I stared at her dress fixedly and asked.

“What happened!?”

“Huhu, you won't see them even if you stare so intently. Do you want to try lifting my dress up?”

“No thanks!”

Licorice fiddled with the hem of her dress seductively, but I answered with a forehead flick. While she muttered in pain, the castle she and the other succubi were living in began to crumble.

Once the pain seemingly subsided, Licorice raised her head and looked at the crumbling castle with a touched expression. She then turned around to face me and spoke.

“Dear Husband, I have lost my home now, so you have to take responsibility. Food, clothing, shelter, and everything else!”

“Succubi eat food?”

“Yeah, but we do have a preference, huhu.”

Licorice stared intently at a certain part of my body as she licked her lips. I was already worrying how the guild members would react once they saw her.

Wait, no, after the Floor Master battle, the first one I saw was always...

“Shin-nim? What hap... Kyak!?”

As I expected, we were sent to the front of the Floor Shop. I didn't know what happened to the dungeon when I entered the Event Dungeon, but Loretta, who was approaching me with a worried expression, screamed in shock when she saw Licorice .

“What's that monster!? Shin-nim, n-next to you!”

“Oh, Loretta. This is Licorice.”

“Hi! I'm Licorice, Dear Husband named me. Who are you? Dear Husband's concubine?”

“Dear Husband...?”

Oh look, Loretta's double-edged battle axe... Wait, no, stop with that!

For the next 5 minutes, I explained what had happened. Of course, I introduced Loretta to Licorice as well. Loretta clenched her fists, seemingly thinking about something extremely violent, as she flapped her ears.

“I see... Hmm, 213 succubi and a Succubus Queen... Not to mention, they’re a clan highly apt in battle... Uuu, they’ll be of great help to Shin-nim. Uu... I’ll have to accept...”

“Hm? It’s not like you’re his concubine, so what relation do you have with Dear Husband that gives you the right to accept me or not?”

“Licorice, shut up.”

“Dear Husband, this elf is glaring at me. Scary.”

Even Licorice seemed unable to withstand Loretta’s killing intent as she hid behind my back and trembled. That seemed to make Loretta even more furious.

“Shin-nim, that’s enough!”

“What? But this isn’t my fault!?”

“You could have killed them all with an iron will and stone heart!”

“You want me to kill them when they never had any hostility against me!?”

“Kuk...”

Hard-pressed for a correct response, Loretta drooped her ears and grumbled. At that moment, Licorice tapped on my arm and spoke.

“Dear Husband, I want to go to your home now.”

“Home? You mean the one in the Residential Area? Or the one on Earth?”

Thinking about Licorice and the 213 succubi that should be hiding in her dress, I felt like I was going nuts. As Licorice’s master, I could command her servants perfectly. While each of them had a strength greater than a typical SS rank monster...

“Licorice, we’re going to Earth, now. Loretta, I’ll be back in a bit.”

“Yes, Shin-nim. I’m trusting you, okay? You have to come back! Don’t be seduced by a mere succubus!”

“Mere succubus!? A succubus is a lot better than a mere elf!”

“Quiet both of you.”

After giving Loretta and Licorice appropriate punishments, I returned to Earth with the fretting Licorice. As no one was home, I messaged Hwaya and headed to our guild house on Earth.

Although I was sure I only contacted Hwaya, when I arrived at the guild house, Sumire, Yua, Ludia, and Ye-Eun were all there.

“Why are you all here?”

Hwaya’s answer was particularly noteworthy.

“Well, you said, ‘I got a force we could completely trust!’, so that obviously made me think, ‘what woman is it this time?’ So I gathered people I thought would be my allies.”

“Hey...”

“But it really was a woman... Hwaya Unni’s intuition is scary!”

“So who is she? She doesn’t look human.”

While Ye-Eun’s respect for Hwaya seemed to have rose, Ludia who specialized in holy magic seemed to have felt Licorice’s aura as she put up her guard. Just like I did for Loretta, I explained what happened with Licorice to them.

“214...”

“And they’re all succubi...”

“Wow, she looks much stronger than the Succubus Queen I met before. Is she really a Succubus Queen?”

“Hmph, isn’t it obvious that I’d be stronger than the ones who entrusted their existences to the dungeon? They’re tied to the dungeon, but I’m not.”

“Succubus... Huu.”

I didn’t know why, but Ludia put her staff down seemingly relieved. At that moment, Licorice tilted her head and asked.

“I understand that they’re all Dear Husband’s women, but who’s the legal wife? You see, Mares have a strict hierarchy. If you tell me, I’ll behave accordingly.”

Silence descended. When I was about to say something with a sigh, the atmosphere changed. Ludia put up her staff again, while the air heated up from Hwaya’s fireballs.

“What are you doing!?”

“I thought about making it clear. Legal wife... For now, I’ll accept that position.”

“That position belongs to me!”

“I’m confident in fighting too!”

I used Divine Speed and calmed them down by flicking their foreheads. Then, I continued.

“In any case, with Licorice’s servants, things will get a lot easier. They all have human intelligence and there’s no need to worry about them betraying us.”

“Mmm, we do have a lot of work to do and it’s not like we can keep seeking outside help... and I feel sorry making Sumire work all the time.”

“Right, if we think of them as 213 SS rankers, that’s indeed frightening. They can probably conquer the world with just their strength.”

“My servants are competent! If it’s Dear Husband’s command, they’ll do anything!”

Licorice raised her hand and spoke with a bright voice. After contemplating for a brief moment, Hwaya nodded her head.

“... Alright. I’m looking forward to working together. With your sincerity and ability, let’s maintain a healthy competitive

relationship. That said, I can't accept all 213 others as competitors. Let them find other men!"

"Ah, my clan normally chooses one man to serve. You see, we share a strong link. With it, we can share experiences and grow stronger quicker. But there's also a clear disadvantage. We feel excruciating pain when we do it with other men. So it's always been that the queen chooses a man, while the others follow. Don't worry! Our Dear Husband can easily handle 200 or 300 of us and not even feel tired!"

"That's not the problem!"

"..."

So that's why they were all together in that Event Dungeon... Just when I thought a good relationship would be established between Hwaya and Licorice, it was shattered. That said, everyone accepted the succubus clan's usefulness. First, the Succubus Queen's direct subordinate, the Elder Succubus 'Mirei', became Hwaya's secretary. Though Sumire planned to stay in Korea, she had become free from all the work we've been putting on her.

"I like her. She's even dressed modestly. "

"Please take good care of me, Hwaya-nim."

Leather jacket, leather pants, and grey hair that flowed down to one side of her shoulder. With serene grey eyes, she was the

picture-perfect secretary. Not to mention, as Mirei had strength that was only second to Licorice, she could fight with Hwaya if something happened.

Additionally, dozens of other succubi were placed under Mirei to monitor and collect data on monsters, Event Dungeons, and Event Raids that appeared on Earth.

Until now, Revival didn't have a proper information sector. As a result, information had to flow from an outside source to Hwaya then to me. With this new addition, everything would change.

As all of them had the power of an SS ranker, the proactiveness and information collecting prowess were far greater than before. As Mirei could create mental links between herself and Licorice at any time, Hwaya and I received information practically as they came. The succubi's ability couldn't be described as just great.

“How did you guys lose?”

“Maybe fate got in our way so I could meet Dear Husband.”

“Right.”

It was more difficult to deal with stealthy approaches like Hwaya's, but I liked that Licorice was so brazen. That way, I could strike her down without hesitation.

... Eh? Why did I sound like a horrible guy just now?

However, other than Licorice, Mirei, and the thirty succubi under her command, there were still 182 succubi. What were they supposed to do? They couldn't all climb the dungeon. Should we send them to other countries? While I was wracking my stupid brain, Licorice asked.

“Dear Husband, why are there so many neglected monsters in this world?”

“Oh, that's because people can't easily enter territories that monsters claimed. It's dangerous and we don't even know what monsters are there. Since everyone's busy dealing with the monsters appearing near human territories, they can't gather the numbers to tackle such large areas.”

Then, Licorice pointed at the 182 bats filling the mansion.

“Aren't they there?”

“... You're right!”

The real territorial war between humans and monsters began with a trivial thought. Just like everything in the world usually was.

Chapter 213. The Third Taming (4)

On Earth, some countries were ruined by monsters, and many uninhabited islands were crawling with monsters. I remembered seeing a news report saying that 30% of small islands had been taken over by monsters.

The reason humans could continue to live normally was all thanks to Guardian and Freedom Wing, who always had at least 50% of their forces devoted to stopping the monsters' further encroachment into human territory. This was the reason Guardian and Freedom Wing could continue to exist even while they were being used by people of authority, being doubted of their capabilities, and receiving bad press.

As agencies that protected humanity, this was the Guardian and Freedom Wing's founding goal.

However, even they could not deploy troops to reclaim lands taken over by monsters. As I said before, they just didn't have enough manpower.

Everyday, monsters of unpredictable strength appeared in completely unexpected places. From what I knew, only Ciara could predict their appearance. However, even Ciara could only cover an area about the size of an average city. In the end, it was Guardian and Freedom Wing that protected humanity from unforeseen deaths. As this task took most of their forces, they had no choice but to leave monsters' territories alone no matter how dangerous they were.

In territories controlled by monsters, their rate of appearance sharply rose. It was the same as how monsters continually spawned in Field Dungeons. At first, I thought the monsters were reproducing, but this wasn't the case.

Reproduction meant the birth of new lives. For the invading monsters who didn't have a world's power, this was impossible. Plus, not even monsters could give birth to already grown monsters. The fact that no baby monsters had been found strongly rejected the possibility that they were reproducing. In that case, there was only one possibility left – the pathway.

I conjectured that when the number of certain monsters in a set area increased, the pathway would widen and allow more of their kind to pass through. This made sense especially since I knew that being invaded by two worlds accelerated the speed of invasion.

In any case, it was true that territories seized by monsters spawned more monsters. Currently, the number of monsters in these territories was shocking. Philippines, Madagascar, Republic of South Africa, and Dominican Republic were already ruined. Germany, Britain, America, Korea, and other countries had also lost much of their land to monsters. Although everyone wanted to reclaim their land, no one could put it into action.

Now that I thought about it, Joshua Brightman who tried to create a separate independent organization just to go against Revival was really shameless. He should have just kept doing his job properly. Of course, since he now had to live the rest of his life eating porridge and medicine, I couldn't say much more.

In any case, this was where the succubi army stepped in. As they weren't restrained to the dungeon, though they almost died of old age as virgins. they were able to keep their original strengths and even shared battle experience and skill proficiency with each other.

212 succubi had magic power on par with SS rankers, while Mirei's strength was somewhere between SS+ rank and SSS rank, and Licorice's strength was SSS+ rank. It wouldn't be an overstatement to say that they could easily stomp any force on Earth.

To be frank, if the members of Revival fought against them without me, the result was clear. Unless about five other members received gods' true names, they would undoubtedly lose.

Though the succubi couldn't climb the dungeon, there was no need to let them sit around and do nothing. Plus, Licorice said that the mana and vitality succubi needed to live could be stolen from monsters. Thus, this 'subjugation' would be vital for their survival.

"Oh, you don't need to worry, we won't do it with anyone other than Dear Husb— kyak!"

I smacked Licorice's head and shut her up.

"I know, you already said you had a special magic for it."

“Dear Husband, your method of showing affection is too violent... sob.”

I looked around at the succubi in the mansion and spoke.

“We prepared robes for all of you. Honestly, the way you’re currently dressed is too lewd.”

“Dear Husband prepared clothes for us!”

“Wooooow!”

All 182 succubi cheered. As they were incredibly loud, I considered using Frozen Roar, but since they had already become my allies, I knew I couldn’t freeze them. On the other hand, Licorice and other succubi that weren’t chosen to be part of the battle squad became depressed. You were lying when you said you shared emotions, weren’t you?

“Licorice, don’t look so sad. There’s one for you too. It’s our guild robe.”

“Guild robe?”

Right, the clothes I had prepared for them were Revival’s guild robes. Revival’s guild emblem, suggested by vice-guild master Hwaya and agreed upon by majority of others, was embroidered on them. By giving almost all the monster materials I had to the best blacksmith I knew, about 300 of them had been made. To be

honest, when I first commissioned for them to be made, I was worried whether they would all find owners...

‘Thanks, Lin. I’ll remember to buy you a drink later.’

I gave everyone their robes as I lightly pushed aside Lin cursing under his breath in my head. The succubi examined the robes and cheered.

“They all have magic imbued in them!”

“Wow, they’re skin-tight! Just the way we like it!”

“Golden embroidery on black, they’re gorgeous.”

“But what’s this on the back? There’s a streak of lightning enveloping a spear!”

“That’s... the guild emblem.”

As I felt that the guild emblem only represented me, I voted against it, but Hwaya pushed for it seriously. According to her, I was the one currently representing Revival. After getting a confirmation that the guild emblem would change later, I agreed to it. Truthfully, even if I didn’t agree, as a majority of guild members agreed, it would have been pushed through.

“Mm, I don’t like that it’s not very revealing.”

“What age are you from? In this day and age, rather than showing skin, clothes that accentuate bodily curves are the best!”

The succubi merrily chatted and put on their robes immediately. As they could just wear it on top of their leather clothes which could barely be considered clothes, it was quite simple. The result was 182 women wearing elegant black robes.

When they were wearing the leather clothes unique to succubi, I didn't know where to place my eyes. Now that they were all wearing the same robe, they looked like an elite force. Although the robes openly showed their bodily curves, as expected of clothes Lin made, they exuded the aura of nobility and elegance rather than vulgarity.

Moreover, the somewhat embarrassing lightning spear emblem on their back was conspicuous. It would be impossible for anyone to not think of me when they saw it.

“Let's split you guys up. Each unit will have 30 succubi, and with one more in Unit 1 and Unit 2, there will be 6 units.”

Unit 1 and Unit 2 had 31 succubi, while Unit 3 through Unit 6 had 30. Once the units were formed, the next part was simple. It was choosing where to deploy them. Of the places seized by monsters, there were some where not even 30 SS rankers could guarantee their safety. As such, I limited their first mission to territories that weren't in any countries.

“We’ll be striking islands, coastal areas, and uninhabited islands. Of these, uninhabited islands are practically monster haven, so remember that. After that, we’ll move deeper into land.”

““Yes, Dear Husband!””

With two hundred succubi yelling out ‘Dear Husband’, even I couldn’t help but shudder. However, as it was decided that I would give the command for their first mission, I held in my desire to run away and assigned the six units to different areas. There were hundreds of thousands of uninhabited islands on Earth. Although the number would halve when the isolated ones were taken out, there were still a considerable amount of them.

“Don’t rush it. Safety comes first. Got it?”

““Yes, Dear Husband!””

Please, stop that...!

The succubi could all use magic. Of course, they were most proficient in charm magic and transformation magic. When used together, no matter how advanced modern technology became, it became nearly impossible to track them. In other words, they didn’t need to hold back.

They immediately set off to chase away the monsters claiming Earth’s territories and to obtain mana and vitality to eat. Once they left, the mansion became quiet, and the guild members all

went back to their usual work.

With over thirty succubi residing in the mansion, Ilayda and Sumire also no longer needed to stay in the mansion. When I first arrived with the succubi, Ilayda silently watched on with a surprised expression. It was only after they left that she finally spoke up.

“Guild Master is really amazing. So many of them, you...”

It seemed she was misunderstood something. As she got more confused no matter how much I explained the circumstance, I gave up halfway through.

With all the succubi assigned to their duties, there was nothing more I needed to do other than wait for their periodic report.

With Revival taking in the succubus clan, humans obtained the chance to chase away the monsters. Although I had done it without much thinking, I still considered the possibility that this resulted in something much greater.

Of course, I would only find out later. As I had done what I could, I returned to the dungeon without regrets.

“Mm, I feel a bit uncomfortable hunting succubi. Do you mind if I stay out, Dear Husband?”

“Sure, that’s probably for the best. As long as she isn’t stronger

than you, I won't have any problem defeating her anyways."

When Licorice found out I was going to hunt the Succubus Queen, she backed off with an awkward smile. I led her to the guild house in the Residential Area and challenged the Succubus Queen alone.

"What a charming human. It's been awhile since I got to enjoy myself."

Although she was undoubtedly a Floor Master, the Succubus Queen that appeared alone in front of me was noticeably weaker than Licorice. Though it was something I realized only after meeting Licorice and her clan members, the dungeon's succubi were lacking in charm, strength, and vitality compared to Licorice's clan. The Succubus Queen was no different.

"Come closer, play with me."

"Yeah, let's play!"

I pretended to fall for the Succubus Queen's charm as I ran toward her. The moment she spread out her arms and seemed to use some skill, I struck her with Heroic Strike. As the atmosphere and strength she was giving off were completely different from Licorice, I had no hesitation in doing so.

"Critical Hit!]

“Kuk, Kuhuk...!”

“Lightning Spear Storm!”

“Kyaaaak!”

“Here’s an extra! Wind King’s Rage!”

“Y-You’re not a man!? Kyaaaak!”

When I struck the Succubus Queen with Wind King’s Rage about four times, she helplessly scattered into particles of light. In just 2 minutes, the Floor Master battle had ended.

“Hu, good fight.”

I wiped away the non-existing sweat and murmured, as I thought why Succubus Queen’s purposely revealed openings trying to use charms that didn’t work. At that moment, messages rang out in my ear. It was truly a pleasant sound.

[Amazing! You are the first in the First Dungeon’s history to succeed in soloing the Succubus Queen on the first try! The dungeon will remember you as a great explorer. You obtained 2 skill points as reward. Current skill points: 14]

[You obtained the title, ‘Succubus Queen Master.’ All stats increase by 2. This effect will apply even if the title is not equipped.]

[You defeated the Succubus Queen alone. You obtained the special reward, 'Succubus Queen's Leather Jacket.']

[You obtained 450,000 gold.]

[You received the only reward left hidden for the First Explorer. Congratulations! Your luck stat increases by 1.]

So I was the first for the 65th floor! After happily reading the messages again on the message log, I froze when I saw the reward. Giant Wolf, Golden Scarab, Twin-headed Ogre, and now, it was the fourth tattoo. But... But this...

[Secret. Succubus Queen's Tattoo]

Succubus Queen's Tattoo...? That just screams trouble!

Chapter 214. The Third Taming (5)

Even as I shivered with uneasiness, I reached out to pick the reward which was just too good to pass up. Immediately, the back of my right hand heated up. I had somewhat expected it. After my legs, arms, and the back of my left hand, it was only proper that the next tattoo took the back of the right hand. It couldn't have been my eyes or lips. I wasn't worried at all!

Feeling relieved that it wasn't a place that was hard to cover, I took off my gauntlet and checked my right hand. There, I saw a pair of spread bat wings entangled by two chains. While it was giving off a pink glow and a feeling of elegance, I was relieved that it was a much more wholesome symbol than I thought.

However, I soon came to regret feeling so quickly relieved.

[You obtained the Succubus Queen's Tattoo. Your charm and magic increases by 50. Against members of the opposite sex, the effect doubles. Once per day, you can double your mana.]

“Mm, excellent.”

As someone who was experiencing the effect of the charm stat every day, the Succubus Queen's Tattoo was a great boon. Increasing both magic and charm by 50! Not to mention, the effect of charm doubled against members of the opposite sex. It was truly a monstrous effect.

However, doubling my mana once per day... it was an amazing effect, but it was almost as if... [No, it must be my imagination.](#)

“Let’s head out then.”

After putting my gauntlet back up, I left the Floor Master room. Loretta, who was sitting by the Floor Shop with her chin on her hand, expression changed when she saw me leaving the room.

“Shi, Shin-nim!?”

“What? Is something wrong?”

Was there a tattoo on my body that I didn’t notice? When I became flustered and asked, Loretta took out her double-edged axe and spoke with a flushed face.

“How did you suddenly become so much more charming!? What happened to you, Shin-nim!? If you tell me honestly, nothing bad will happen! I-I-It can’t b-be, w-with that damned succubus, you...!”

The axe in her hand was bending with a creaking noise. T-That thing, I held it once and it was really heavy... Loretta could bend it with just her hands!? As I was scared for my life, I decided to explain everything thoroughly.

“Oh, I see. It was the tattoo’s power.”

Looking relieved, Loretta chuckled the axe behind her. The

dungeon floor caved in. Scary...

“I thought Shin-nim again... Huh, nevermind. That’s good.”

“It looks like I’m still lacking in practice. I thought I was controlling the charming aura I was emitting pretty well. Huh, it’s going to take ages again.”

“Shin-nim’s current charm stat entered a dangerous level. It should be fine for members of the same sex, but for the opposite sex, it will be a disaster. Just imagine every woman that meets Shin-nim’s eyes falling in love with Shin-nim. Once it happens, that’s it. There’s no way to escape it. It’s not a status effect, just that Shin-nim’s charm had conquered their heart.”

“That’s cruel...”

What I had to deal with now was tiring enough!

“Shin-nim’s charm can even shake my heart now. You have to control it carefully.”

“Yes...”

Damn, so having higher stats wasn’t always good! Of course, as magic had increased by 50 points in addition to charm, I needed time to train and digest the increase. I sighed. I then plopped down on the ground and began to circulate Peruta Circuit. Loretta placed her elbow back on the Floor Shop counter and watched me with a

warm smile.

“At least for this time, I get to have Shin-nim for myself, huhuhu.”

“Don’t say something so corny. I can’t focus.”

“Yesss~. Huhu.”

Afterwards, for 10 hours every day, I sat in front of the Floor Shop and trained in controlling my charm. Of course, I didn’t forget to grind the Succubus Queen 10 times a day for the magic and charm increasing invigoration elixir it dropped. Although it may seem like a vain effort, I couldn’t sit idly either.

As I had to avoid seeing those of the opposite sex as much as possible, the only person I saw from Revival daily was Ren, who I had to meet anyways for the thrashing phase.

“I’m sure Crown Prince hates me!”

“I don’t hate you at all. There, you’re open!”

“Is there even a single moment in Crown Prince’s eyes where I don’t have an opening!?”

“Of course not.”

“I knew it, you hate me!”

“Ren is just too weak!”

Because of the charm discharge problem I was having, the underground training room became a prohibited area for the time being. Although Ye-Eun and Sophie who used the room often seemed to be displeased, when I explained the circumstance, they reluctantly accepted it.

As a result, Ren and I got to occupy the training room for ourselves, while Father and Walker sometimes dropped by to watch Ren getting beat up. I was thankful that Michel and Leon were devoting all their time to climbing the dungeon. If there were new spectators, Ren would undoubtedly cry.

“Oh, my son is truly talented in beating people up!”

“I know that first hand. Kang Shin’s beaten me up before.”

“Please leave! Are you happy watching me getting beaten up?”

“Opening!”

“Kuhuk!”

I was relieving the stress of being unable to see Ina and Yua by beating up Ren... Kuhum. Feeling glad that I was helping Ren with

his growth, I spent honest days in the dungeon.

Ever since Ren began to stay on Earth, it seemed he had a change of heart as his quick temperament and habit of losing his sanity in battles was being mended smoothly. Although now might be too early, when I would be grinding the 70th Floor Master, if I held Ren for 10 days, his habit of going berserk might be completely fixed.

“Crown Prince, do you believe you can protect Earth?”

On the 10th day since my 65th Floor Master grinding began, when neither Father nor Walker was in the training room, Ren asked. It seemed he hadn't been just getting beaten up, as he was dodging my attacks skillfully. As I was about to call it a day so I could go grind the Floor Master, I took my spear back and retorted.

“Of course I do. Does Ren think I'll fail?”

“Haha, don't kid. If there's anyone in this guild with an absolute trust in Crown Prince, it would be me.”

Ren retorted with a bitter smile as he leaned against his claymore. As he had used up most of his stamina and mana, he was moving quite slowly.

He slowly swept his hair up. As he dripped with sweat, his lion's mane-like hair became entangled.

He spoke.

“I can’t believe in myself.”

Oh right, Ren had become Panan continent’s Hero. I was the one who made him one.

Remembering that crucial fact, I replied with a shrug.

“You’re lacking in training.”

“Right, I am. That’s what I thought Crown Prince would say... But I’m really shaking. The kids that are looking only at me... Ah, of course, Elfa is also looking at Crown Prince, but the point is, both Lebuik and the kids trust me wholeheartedly. They trust that I’ll chase the El Patiz out and reclaim the Panan continent. I... I find that extremely pressuring.”

“Don’t worry about it so much. There are still 2 years at least.”

I replied as if it was something trivial and returned my spear to its choker form. Ren looked at me and asked.

“If you die, Earth will lose its future. Have you not thought about that?”

“Nope.”

“If you die, billions of people will lose their future. Even if they don’t fall into the monsters’ hands, they will slowly wither away. Have you never despaired thinking about that?”

“Nope.”

“When you die, those left on Earth will resent you and curse you with all their heart. Have you ever woken up in the middle of the night when they appear in your dreams?”

“Nope.”

After replying that far, I glared at Ren.

“Are you stupid? I’m busily swinging my spear, climbing the dungeon, and gathering more members of Revival. I already had my mind full of all these, so how would I have the time to think about something that hasn’t even happened and despair? Rather than worrying about all that, just swing your sword one more time.”

“How can you do that? What I’m saying is, how can you shake away all this pressure?”

It seemed an unforeseen side effect came over Ren’s thrashing phase. He was feeling pressure as a Hero and he had come to doubt his abilities. For someone who looked so reliable, he couldn’t be more delicate. Simply put, it was annoying.

“Ren, how many beastmen are alive in Panan continent?”

“I’m not sure, but it can’t be many. There’s the possibility that there are none left.”

“What would happen if Ren suddenly dies and loses the Hero’s power?”

“Humans and beastmen wouldn’t be able to proliferate on Panan continent ever again... Though Lebuik and the kids will be fine.”

“Then even if Ren dies, it’s not like a lot of people will lose their future, right?”

“That’s true, but then the Panan continent will...!”

I gathered mana at my fingertips and flicked it at him. It hit Ren’s forehead and pushed him backward.

“You don’t even know how many people will die, so how can you be so scared? There’s probably nothing more pathetic than that. Plus, it’s not like you’ll be going back to Panan continent alone. I and other members of Revival will also go.”

“Crown Prince...”

“Ren, you said you trusted me. Then there’s nothing to worry about. I’ll go back to Panan continent with Ren, and if Ren’s

strength isn't enough, I'll offer my power. So rather than worrying about the consequences of Ren dying, just focus on your training."

I then dealt the heavy blow.

"Let's double the thrashing phase's intensity. I was happy thinking that Ren was getting better, but it turns out Ren was just out of steam. I'll make sure Ren gets Ren's lost spirit back. Aren't you happy?"

"I'm not happy at all! Double!? Did you just say double!?"

Ren's ears perked up and shook. However, I had no intention of taking back my words.

However, as I had understood how he was feeling, I decided to be a bit more honest.

"I'm also human, Ren. Of course, I thought about such things and got a bit depressed. But Ren, if I die, will Ren blame me?"

"Of course not! You're doing everything you can!"

"Would Yua, Hwaya, or Ina blame me?"

"Rather than Earth facing an end, I think they'd be sadder that Crown Prince died."

“Right. So there’s nothing I need to fear. I’m already doing all that I can.”

I put my hands on his shoulders.

“Ren, you do everything you can too. Then, you won’t have anything to fear. Plus, I’m the one that made Ren a Hero. I think of Ren as my disciple, so I’ll help Ren too.”

“Is that why you’re doubling the thrashing phase...”

Seeing Ren’s sullen face, a sinister thought crossed my mind.

“Oh, by the way, Ren, if it gets too hard, ask Lebuik to sleep together with you.”

“H-H-H-H-How can I do that! To Lebuik!?”

“Didn’t you say Lebuik was like a mother? When things get hard, falling asleep in mother’s embrace is the best.”

“But this and that are totally different things!”

“Just believe me. Go to Lebuik’s room at night and ask, ‘Can I rely on you a bit?’ Lebuik treasures Ren too. She’ll surely let you in.”

“Lebuik will never do that!”

“Ren, do as I say. Lebuik won’t refuse, I promise.”

“... Really?”

“Really. You can kick me otherwise.”

“Mmm... Alright, if Crown Prince is willing to go that far, I’ll give it a try... I didn’t know Lebuik thought of me as a son...”

‘Well, something like that. I’m sure she thinks of making a son with you.’ I replied to his murmuring in my heart and began to think about how Lebuik would repay this favor. Right, [banquet noodles](#) would be best.

A Korean reader asked the author what this meant. The Author replied, “Try substituting mana with some other unit...”

Traditionally Korean noodles served at weddings.

Chapter 215. What's a Hero Anyways? (1)

[You have consumed the Succubus Queen's Tattoo Invigoration Elixir to the limit. The Succubus Queen's Tattoo became enhanced to its peak performance. Magic and charm increases by 14. The power of all skills and Authorities is multiplied by 1.5 times.]

[You equipped the Succubus Queen Set. Your magic and charm increases by 35. When the Succubus Queen Set is equipped, you can use 'Sweet Nightmare' once per day.]

[When Sweet Nightmare is used against a target with lower charm than you, you will steal half of the target's health and inflict 'critical charm' status effect to the target. When Sweet Nightmare is used against a target with higher charm than you, you will lose half of your health and mana, and fall into 'inescapable avolition' status effect.]

The day I made Ren fall into that hellish trap, I successfully completed my Succubus Queen grind. As magic and charm increased by 4 points every time they increased by invigoration elixirs, with the 14 points that went up at the end, my magic and charm had increased by 50 points total. In effect, the Succubus Queen's Tattoo was increasing my magic and charm by a terrifying 100 points.

Plus, the tattoo's effect didn't just increase my stats. In addition to doubling the effect of my charm against the opposite sex, I could double my mana once per day.

Although the hidden meaning behind it was incredibly disturbing, I had no choice but to use it since it was undoubtedly

helpful. Within my skill arsenal, there were quite a few skills that were affected by charm. Provoke, Overwhelm, Absolute Soul, half of the Elementalist skills, half of the Tamer skills, and so on. In fact, it might be easier to say that only my Spear Technique was unaffected by charm. I couldn't tell if charm was that important, or if my skills were just strange.

“50% increase to skills is one thing... but Authorities...?”

The Evil Eyes of Petrification might be included.

My Evil Eyes were arguably the ability that was most sensitive to my magic and charm stats. While the result of its effect was based on my magic stat, it was also amplified by the difference of league between me and my target, and the negative emotions the target had toward me.

With how things were turning out, it was almost as if the Evil Eyes of Petrification was created to become mine.

After all, just obtaining the Succubus Queen's Tattoo had nearly increased my Evil Eyes' strength by half, but now that it was fully upgraded, it gave another 50% boost. I was itching to test it out.

“Will I be able to petrify monsters in Beyond now? No, that's probably wishful thinking... Well, let's go clean up monster territories on Earth later and test it out.”

Although it had only been a few days, the succubi battle units had

swiftly taken care of a countless number of monsters. No matter how stealthy they were, with the discernible results they produced, it was difficult to remain hidden. After all, satellite observations revealed the number of monsters clearly dwindling.

As if to satiate the hunger they'd be holding in all this time, the succubi sucked all monsters' seeds dry. As monsters absorbed by the succubi's magic didn't leave behind their corpses or even Mana Stones, such an expression wasn't an exaggeration. Just like that, Earth slowly began to contain fewer monsters. Although now wasn't a good time, Revival's members should soon be able to join the succubi in sweeping the monsters away.

Soon, countries that lost their lands to monsters after Two Moon would be able to reclaim them. Soon. As soon as I thought that my heart began to pound. I, a single dungeon explorer, would come to command such a large-scale operation. The past me who just found out about the dungeon would never have imagined it.

"I'm sure we can do it. In fact, we could even exterminate all monsters and demons before the worlds' enemies arrive."

I murmured with a smile. Thinking about what kind of an expression the Demon Lord would have upon our reunion, I began to look forward to the future.

Thanks to toiling away for ten days, I could now somewhat naturally conceal my charm. As the charm stat was related to the magic stat to a certain degree, I could block the release of charm by circulating Peruta Circuit.

Although the process was easily described in words, with how much charm I came to exude, completely containing it took some effort. Regardless, there was no longer any problem.

“Shin-nim, seeing as how happy you are, you must have finished grinding.”*

“Yep. Floor Master skills really are amazing.”

Ah, come to think of it, the 65th Floor Master’s skill wasn’t the type of skill I hoped for. I was hoping I could synthesize it with the skills I got from the 60th Floor Master and 10th Floor Beyond Master... Of course, Sweet Nightmare was still a powerful skill, just that it was nothing more than a suicide skill without high charm.

All this time, I wondered why the Succubus Queen blanked out when I had yet to do anything. I thought it was a bug of some sort, but it turned out that they were dazed from their failed skill. As for me, since my charm was higher than even the Succubus Queen’s, it seemed I didn’t need to worry about the skill’s penalty too much.

“I’m off then.”

“Where are you going?”

“Beyond’s 15th floor, of course.”

“Rest a bit. Rest! With me!”

Loretta shouted, but I shook my head with a grin.

“We can play after I clear Beyond’s 15th floor.”

“... Really?”

“Yes.”

“Yay!”

Loretta shot up her arms in pure happiness. After smiling at her one last time, I headed to the gate leading to Beyond’s 15th floor. At that moment, Loretta suddenly shouted.

“Wait! Beyond’s 15th floor!?”

“Yeah, what about it?”

“Uwaaaak, that place... not even Beyond explorers had succeeded in breaking through on their first try! Wait, I’ll threaten Old... Lord and give some advantage to Shin-nim...”

“Loretta, it’s... already too late.”

Half of my body was already through the gate. Loretta frowned.

“Geez! When you die, come to Fairy Garden! Then we can play together!”

“It sounds like you’re sentencing me to death!?”

I shouted at Loretta who seemed to be certain that I would die. The next moment, the surrounding scenery changed. I had entered Beyond’s 15th floor, where even the mighty Beyond explorers had failed to break through on their first try.

“Since I’m here, it’s not like I can run away...”

With a hint of anxiousness, I murmured as I stared at the door in front of me. Not a single Beyond explorer succeeded on their first try? Did that include Ren’s father and ‘that person’ from Beyond’s Residential Area?

At that moment, I remembered that Revival had a reliable senior Beyond explorer. I immediately messaged her.

“Daisy.”

[Un.]

She replied extremely quickly. She also sounded energetic.

[At the mansion. Sumire made me food. Delicious.]

“Um, that’s good... There’s something I need to ask.”

[I’m eating. Busy.]

“Have you cleared Beyond’s 15th floor?”

[... Still on the 82nd floor. Beat Beyond’s 14th floor. Kang Shin, you’re at 15th?]

“Yeah. I was going to ask you about it... but never mind.”

[Wait for me. 15th floor, together.]

“That’s possible?”

[Un. Form a party, then enter. Same floor, possible.]

“I see... But I’m already inside.”

[... Master doubting guild member’s potential, not good.]

“Sorry, I didn’t think we could challenge Beyond as parties. We can challenge the 16th floor together then.”

[I’m back to eating.]

“Sure, sure.”

I finished my conversation with Daisy, who seemed to be sulking. It would have been nice if she told me about it beforehand... Looks like she didn't think I would arrive at the 15th floor so quickly.

Daisy seemed to have wanted to challenge the 15th floor with me. It made sense why. Although we were far apart in the First Dungeon, since our progress in Beyond was about even, it was undoubtedly better to challenge the Floor Master together, especially since there was a high chance of dying. No matter how important the solo-clear reward was, it wasn't worth wasting a month's worth of time.

That said, even if we cleared the 15th floor together, Daisy's Dungeon clearing speed was different compared to mine. After all, she was around the 80s level and I was around 60s. I could climb the First Dungeon in just a few hours. Although I didn't think this would continue forever, I would still be faster than Daisy for a while. If we tried to match our speed, we would end up wasting more time than necessary.

Of course, it still would have been nice to clear the 15th floor together... Damn.

“Eeei, it's too late. Let's just go in.”

I held my crossbow. The moment I saw the Floor Master's weapon, I planned on firing dozens of bolts and instantly using

Weapon Swap. That way, my spear would get the bonus from Weapon Swap.

I also summoned my elementals. As I wanted to place more emphasis on power than speed, I infused Peika into my weapon. To bolster my defense and create chances to counterattack, I infused Ruyue in my armor. Finally, to further increase my already quick speed, to gain the ability to fly, and to increase my overall ability, I infused Sharana into my body.

Furthermore, I released the charm I was suppressing. Most likely as a result of Spirit of the Tamer, a sweet scent began to spread out. Uuu, although it was my own ability, I found it unpleasant.

“This might be the perfect chance to use Sky God’s Rage. In fact, I may have saved it for this very moment.”

I kicked open the door. Then, as always, I shouted.

“Fight me! You... huk.”

I couldn’t help but gasp. A large, truly humongous space was waiting for me.

“That’s...”

The 15th floor’s Beyond Master should have the traits of the Skeleton Knight and the Giant Ghoul. That is to say, it should be made of bones, have rotting flesh, be an undead, have great

regeneration ability, and have terrifying charging ability...

[Guooooooooooooo!]

It roared. Several spots where chunks of flesh were missing revealed its eerie black bones, while its tail was only made of bones as it swayed in the air threateningly. Its skin was certainly rotting, though most of its body was made of bones. Although I couldn't be sure, I had the feeling it had an incredible regeneration ability and possessed an unavoidable charge skill. Of course, it was undoubtedly an undead.

[Guaaaaaaa!]

[Dragon Zombie used 'Roar of Resentment'! All living beings fall under a powerful curse and have their bodies mutated by resentment of evil. High-ranking chaos and fear permeates the area.]

[Your pure soul perfectly countered the curse! You nullify all mental status effects. Your immunity to mutations prevents your body from mutating!]

The fact that I could counter this terrifying roar was certainly a good thing. However, there was something more important.

“Rather than looking down on explorers that failed on their first try, don't I need to look up to the explorers that defeated this damned guy!?”

It wasn't anyone else. I, Kang Shin, had to fight this 200-meter

long Dragon Zombie!

Author's note:

That's right, it's a dragon! And a zombie! Of course, actually dragons can't be compared to mere zombies, so don't think Dragon Zombie = dragon! Don't get all excited thinking 'dragon slayer!' Of course, even if I say this, there are going to be readers commenting something about God's true name related to dragon slayers.

Chapter 216. What's a Hero Anyways? (2)

“I don’t even know where to begin.”

With how huge the Dragon Zombie was, it didn’t feel real. As a test, I aimed my crossbow at its eye... No, they had already rotted away into oblivion! That meant the effect of my Evil Eyes would be halved. Furthermore, since it was an undead, charm wouldn’t work on it either. There was no chance to use all the weapons I honed through grinding the 65th floor.

[Guooooooooooo!]

“Kuk, it’s coming!”

For a zombie so big, the Dragon Zombie charged towards me with an incredible speed. I hurriedly soared into the air and dodged its charge. However, when it smashed into the wall, a countless number of bone spears shot out of the walls toward me.

“What!?”

Shocked, I twisted my body in the air. However, with how many there were, it was impossible to dodge them all.

“Ruyue!”

[Un!]

Thousands of ice crystals formed around my armor, blocking the bone spears. Even so, a few managed to break through the ice, damaging me. I could feel a considerable amount of mana flowing into me. it meant that although this Dragon Zombie was an undead, it possessed an enormous amount of mana.

“Eat this!”

I consecutively fired dozens of bolts brimming with lightning. Thanks to its huge body, the bolts hit their mark without any resistance and crackled with lightning. Even so, they didn't seem to affect the Dragon Zombie too much.

“Kuk, there goes my bolt spamming plan.”

Without hesitation, I swapped my weapon. At that moment, the Dragon Zombie roared. ‘Your roars won't work!’ was what I wanted to shout, but contrary to my expectations, terrifying bone spears pierced through its rotted skin and shot out of its body similar to when it hit the wall before.

[Guooooooooooooo!]

“This bastard...!”

It was like a machine gun endlessly firing bullets. With how many bone spears it was shooting out, it was difficult to even get near it. However, the crossbow bolts had little to no effect, and it

was impossible to tell how long it would take to kill it with just the power of my elementals. Just like always, I had to take part in this fight by close combat.

I grabbed one of the thick bone spears that shot towards me. With Chaotic Spear in one hand and the bone spear in the other, I charged forward. Of course, I didn't forget to activate Divine Speed.

[Guooooooooo!]

“Uraaaaaaaaaaah!”

All the bone spears seemed to be traveling slowly. Using the spears in my hands, I hit them away like a headless chicken. What was a mere 3 second period felt like 30 seconds as I closed the distance between me and the Dragon Zombie.

“Eat this. Heroic Strike!”

By sending the aura-filled bone spear in my hand flying, I obliterated the clump of bone spears in my path. Then, holding onto the Chaotic Spear with both hands, I shot towards the Dragon Zombie's neck. Even though it didn't have any eyes, it managed to detect me, as it opened its mouth to swallow me whole. Hmph! I stabbed my spear into its nose bridge and let the gathered energy detonate.

[Critical Hit!]

“Come on, even a critical hit can’t cut off a bit of its flesh!?”

[Kuaaaaang!]

“Ruyue!”

As I was expecting, it shot out a large bone spear from the attacked area. Honestly, it looked like a dragon, but it really was a damn cactus! I quickly pulled my spear out and drew forth Ruyue’s power. When the bone spear was close to piercing my chest, the freezing energy made it flinch, and I safely escaped using this opportunity. A moment later, the giant bone spear passed by my head and shredded through the air.

[Guooooooooooooooooo!]

Immediately afterwards, the Dragon Zombie charged! Though I knew what would happen when it hit a wall, I had no choice but to get out of its way. After all, I couldn’t take a charge from its 200 meter long body!

“Ruyue, barrier! Sharana, strengthen it!”

[Got it!]

[Yes, Master!]

I distanced myself from the walls as much as possible and

ordered my elementals to create a barrier around me. Then, I troubled over what to do. Should I continue?

“No, I’ll die if I do.”

The Heroic Strike just now had a good amount of my mana, and was even a critical hit. Ordinary Floor Masters would have lost half of their health with that attack. However, that bastard didn’t even flinch! Damn! Plus, I would be in trouble the moment I was hit by even a single bone spear. Could this battle get any more unfair?

“Everyone would have taken out their god’s true names here and still died.”

However, I wouldn’t die. I had two god’s true names! Plus, I had...

“Alright, I’ll show you my full strength, you goddamned lizard!”

I frantically dodged the bone spears that broke through the ice barrier as I shot my body upward. Soon, this huge space’s ceiling was in my view. Though I didn’t know what material it was made of, there wasn’t even a scratch even with all the bone spears that struck it.

“Found it.”

The special large sized bone spear it shot out when I attacked it before! I flew up and grabbed it. Then, I moved Peika, who was

inside the Chaotic Spear, to the bone spear. The Dragon Zombie was watching me with its hollow eyes. It then flapped its rotting wings. It was trying to fly!

“Huu... Gigant Time!”

The already big bone spear became a hundred meters long. The weight in my hand caused me to groan, but it was still acceptable.

“Ruyue, materialize into human form! Hold that guy!”

[Un!]

After leaving my armor and materializing into the form of a beast girl, Ruyue drew a silver trajectory as she shot toward the Dragon Zombie. Human-form materialization had granted her a terrifying upgrade in power, as she grabbed the bone spears the Dragon Zombie shot out one by one, froze them, and shot them back.

Meanwhile, I activated the skill I received from the 60th Floor Master Superior Doppelganger.

“Powered Form!”

In that instant, a thicker and sharper armor appeared over my armor. The Superior Doppelganger possessed the ability to copy the powerful genes of its enemies to strengthen itself. The skill I received somewhat reflected this characteristic.

[You activated Powered Form. Your defense and attack power increases by 30% for 5 minutes.]

“Sacrifice!”

A black aura enshrouded my spear. With this, the spear had doubled in power. If I used Heroic Strike, it would undoubtedly hurt. However, I wasn’t done yet.

“Sky God’s Rage!”

[Good, Master! I’ll maximize its power!]

Zeus’ lightning descended on the 100 meter long spear. Any impurities left in the bone spear was completely washed clean, as it overflowed with pure golden divine power. It was almost as if it was a completely different weapon. Seemingly understanding the power behind it, the Dragon Zombie desperately shot out bone spears.

[Careful!]

“It’s over!”

Now that I’d used Sacrifice, if it didn’t die after this, I would likely die. However, a real man didn’t hesitate! I threw the 100 meter long lightning. One could imagine how large this space was

with how long the spear flew. Right, such an enormous spear could fly for 2 seconds, even when it was so fast that I could barely discern it with my eyes!

[I can't hold it back anymore!]

“Let go! Now!”

The moment I gave the order, Ruyue let go and flew back to me. At the same time, the lightning spear flew by her side and pierced through Dragon Zombie's neck, skewering it perfectly.

[Critical Hit!]

“Kuhuk!”

I immediately coughed out a mouthful of blood. It also hurt like hell. My head felt blank. Because of how much life force I lost in an instant, I felt my body go limp. However, I grit my teeth and raised my head.

“Did it die?”

[It didn't die!]

Peika exclaimed as she left the bone spear and flew back.

I barely steadied myself in the air and examined the Dragon

Zombie. The bone spear was still skewering it and erupting out with Zeus' divine power. With how the spear was sticking out from its mouth, it really did look like a kabob skewer.

[Guoooooooooooo!]

However, even with a giant spear penetrating it, the Giant Zombie Dragon only let out pained screams as it flapped its wings to fly up. To think it was still alive... it really did have a zombie-like life force. Wait, it really was a zombie! Damn!

“Haa, haa... Kuk, this feeling.”

[Devourer activates! Choose a target!]

With my HP hitting 10%, Devourer activated. I was thankful Sacrifice left 10% of my HP. Otherwise, Diehard would have undoubtedly aviated.

That said, I didn't think this Dragon Zombie could withstand the attack that crushed the Power Basilisk. Not to mention, it was even stronger than before. Though there were other explorers attacking the Power Basilisk, even taking that into account, this bastard was stronger than the Power Basilisk! How is that fair!?

[Guooooo!]

“Well, it's not completely absurd, I guess.”

Dozens of dark spheres rose up in the air. Seeing as how strength was leaving the Dragon Zombie's body, these dark spheres seemed to be the demonic energy forming its body. Even if it couldn't use magic, it looked like it could still utilize this energy.

For getting rid of disgusting things, burning it was the best.

“Peika, it's your turn. Materialize.”

[But Master, Master's mana is...!]

“It's fine.”

Now, it was time for my tattoo to shine. I immediately activated the Succubus Queen's Tattoo. My mana, which had fallen to the bottom of my reserves with Ruyue's materialization and the Heroic Strikes, skyrocketed, only stopping when it reached double the usual amount. My body was still worn-out from Sacrifice, and with mana suddenly filling up, I felt short of breath. Peika seemed to have realized how I was feeling, as she hurriedly materialized.

[I'll protect Master from that evil energy!]

“Thanks.”

My HP was at 10%. Although I gulped down a Health Potion, my HP only went up slowly. It seemed the recovery was being

hindered by Devourer's effect. It was as if it was telling me not to play any tricks. I clicked my tongue and held up the Chaotic Spear. Then, gathering up the overflowing mana within me, I formed a whirlpool of chaos flames.

“Desire Thorn, Sacrifice.”

I activated the other two skills my armor, Pure Black Desire, had. The former increased the power of charge type attacks by 50% and helped me regain HP, while the latter doubled a skill's power in exchanging for making me take 25% of the damage. Since Devourer was also active, Pure Black Desire's abilities were in full effect.

[Guoooooooo!]

[Hmph!]

The demonic energy balls flew toward me. Peika harrumphed and burned them up with her lightning. I also charged as I shouted.

“Kuaaaaaaaa!”

[You activated Frozen Roar! All enemies in the battlefield freezes in place. All allies temporarily become super-armored and all abilities are increased by 50%. Your chance of landing a critical hit doubles when fighting enemies affected by Frozen Roar.]

“If you’re alive after this, then I’ll call you Hyung-nim!”

The Twin-headed Ogre’s Tattoos on my arms let out a bright red glow as if they were on fire. Once per day, increasing close-ranged attack skill’s damage by 50%! It went without saying that charge type skills were close-ranged skills.

“Eat this! Wind King’s Rage!”

I shot down towards the Dragon Zombie. As there were no trash monsters between us, I charged in full throttle. Focusing the enormous wind and lightning energy at the tip of my spear, I thrust forward.

“Haaaaa... Kuk!”

Immediately before my spear stabbed it, a bone spear struck my chest. Although it didn’t penetrate my armor, the enormous shock devoured what little HP I had left. I couldn’t believe it still had bones to shoot out!

[Guoooo!]

“I’m not dead yet, fucker!”

Although I thought I would die for a second, Diehard activated soundly and raised my HP back up. With how low my HP was, there was no way I would’ve charged head on without an insurance.

Although Devourer tried to hinder Diehard's recovery, my HP was thankfully going up. Although my charge's momentum was cut short, I continued forward and stabbed my spear in the Dragon Zombie's head. At the same time, Desire Thorn and Devourer's effect activated. Black energy left the screaming Dragon Zombie's body to become absorbed by me, but dissipated due to Sacrifice's penalty.

As I gasped for breath, I examined the Dragon Zombie, hoping it would scatter into particles of light.

[Kuooo, kuoooooooooo!]

“What, you're still not dead!?”

It roared. Lumps of flesh sprung up from its body like boiling water. It was trying to spit something out. In panic, I shouted.

“Just die already! Crimson Roar!”

In the next moment, everything within my sight turned red. The Dragon Zombie's roar and my shout both became flames. In this space, only flames existed.

With that, it was over.

[Congratulations! A first in Beyond's history! You defeated the Floor Master, Dragon Zombie, on your first try!]

Author's note:

Kang Shin didn't want to serve the Dragon Zombie as his hyung.

Chapter 217. What's a Hero Anyway? (3)

[Congratulations! For the first time in Beyond's history, you defeated the Floor Master, Dragon Zombie, on your first try! You received 3 skill points as a reward. Current skill points: 10]

[Your achievements reached a threshold, allowing you to obtain a third god's true name! All god's eyeing you begin to compete.]

[You obtained the title, 'Zombie Dragon Master.' All stats increase by 2. The title's effect will apply even when the title is not equipped.]

[You obtained the entrance ticket to the SSS+ rank 2-man Event Dungeon, 'Deadland'!]

[You cleared Beyond's 15th floor. You obtained the qualification to challenge the First Dungeon's 66th floor.]

[You obtained 5 bonus stats. Your maximum HP and MP increase by 2%.]

[Experience has been added to the skills you frequently used to progress through Beyond's 15th floor.]

[You received the only reward left hidden for the first explorer. Congratulations! Your luck stat increases by 10.]

[1. Thorn Throne (Epic)]

Although messages were ringing in my ears, it was hard to hear them as I had just used Crimson Roar. I calmly waited for the flames to subside and read the message log. When I saw the line about the Event Dungeon, I coughed.

“It was Wonderland before, now it's Deadland...”

Plus, this one was SSS+ rank though it was only for 2 people. Scary...

“Should I just sell it at the auction house...?”

At that moment, someone’s face flashed across in my mind. It was the face of someone who was arguably the second strongest member of Revival and loved the undead.

Unlike the Dungeon, monsters didn’t scatter into particles of light in Event Dungeons. To Daisy, who loved the undead, this Deadland was probably more of a wonderland than the Wonderland.

“And this is the secret reward.”

[Secret. Thorn Throne (Epic)]

Its simple name made it even more scarier. Since it was the reward for defeating that damned Zombie Dragon, it was certainly not simple. With a firm mind, I grabbed the reward which was clearly labeled ‘Epic’. Its name didn’t give any hints as to what kind of an item it was. When it materialized in my hand, I saw that it was a ring. It looked like it was made of dragon bones and glowed in a hazy black color. Its surface was spiky, as if it had thorns. If I wasn’t careful, I felt that it would prick me.

[Thorn Throne (Epic)]

Durability – Unbreakable

Equipment Requirement – Kang Shin

Option – Strength +50, Dexterity +50. Constitution -20, Magic -20. When using attack skills, there is a 5% chance, dozens of dragon bones spears will shoot out. When attacked, there is a 10% chance, a bone spear will shoot out and attack the enemy.

Skill – Thorn Throne: Usable once per day. For 5 minutes, your body gets covered with an armor of bones. You reflect 20% of all incoming damage. At this time, the enemy becomes afflicted with the unavoidable debuff ‘soul contamination.’]

“!”

This ring was deserving of its Epic grade. No, perhaps it was even worthy of the Legend grade! Though it decreased my constitution and magic stats, with its incredible strength and dexterity stat boost, it was still a 60 point net gain! The decrease in constitution and magic could be easily made up by distributing bonus stat points into them.

Furthermore, the chances of its option activating was high! It was incomparable to the Deathblood Ring. Though, I did find it a bit perverted that the chance of the effect proccing was higher when I was attacked than when I attacked.

Regardless, the real kicker was the skill the ring contained.

“It’s here! It’s finally here!”

The skill I was hoping for was a transformation skill, one that would let me display even greater strength for a limited period of time, just like the Powered Form I received from the 60th floor. Thorn Throne was precisely the type of skill I was hoping for. Although its offensive nature somewhat worried me, I hoped it would be fine.

I immediately extracted Thorn Throne from the ring and stored it in the pocket watch. Then, without hesitation, I activated Skill Synthesis. I then placed Thorn Throne in the base skill slot and placed Powered Form in the supplemental skill slot.

Of course, there were more. I placed ‘Electric Guardian Form’ skill, extracted from the armor given by Beyond’s 10th floor boss, Powered Lizard Knight. As for the reason I wasn’t wearing it, as it was a Unique grade armor, it paled in comparison to Pure Black Desire. The reason I wanted a transformation type skill in the first place was because I had obtained Electric Guardian Form on top of Powered Form.

[Electric Guardian Form: For 5 minutes, an armor of lightning covers your body. All incoming magic damage decreases by 30%, and your speed and attack power increases by 20%.]

Although it was a bit lacking compared to the Powered Form or the Thorn Throne, it was still a transformation skill with excellent effects. It would only help, not hurt, as a supplemental skill.

“A man should be daring!”

I still had two skills left. One was Dragon Skin, the other was

Gigant Time. While Dragon Skin greatly boosted my defense, it decreased my speed significantly, making me reluctant to use it in most situations. Since I generally didn't need Dragon Skin more than once per day, I decided to include it in the Skill Synthesis to amplify its effect.

It was the same for Gigant Time. By combining multiple skills together, they could help to lessen each other's weaknesses. In truth, I had too many skills. It was best to lower the count whenever possible.

“Skill Synthesis!”

Seeing the circular stone slab rotating, I let out a small sigh. I had a good feeling about it, just like the time I created Absolute Soul. Considering all the skills that went into it, it was only obvious. If I didn't like the resulting skill, I planned on synthesizing it away immediately!

Soon, just like when Absolute Soul was created, the stone slab let out a brilliant light. I watched without breathing until the stone slab stopped spinning. At that moment, something unexpected happened. The stone slab, which was continuously shooting out brilliant light, suddenly crackled with lightning.

“W-What? I thought this skill couldn't fail!”

The stone slab continued to crackle with lightning. Every time the lightning flashed, the golden brilliance the stone slab was letting out became a bit darker. It also began to spin, fluctuating in

speed as strange symbols flashed above it.

“Oh, please, no! Dear God, Buddha, Allah, the dungeon’s Lord, please let it succeed!”

This skill can’t even fail! Stop making me all nervous!

As if to answer my prayer, the stone slab finally came to a stop. On top of the cracked stone slab crackling with lightning was a strange symbol that did not shine with even a hint of its original brilliance, instead letting out an eerie black light.

[Scary. Master, are you learning that?]

[Uuu, that’s dangerous, Shin.]

[Master, I think that mana both accepts and rejects everything. It’s... a very powerful and dangerous power.]

Hey, why are you guys making me worry more!? I was already feeling uneasy, but now that the elementals gathered and trembled, I felt even more uneasy. However, I couldn’t just reject the skill and return it to its previous form. I had spent my precious skills for this.

I strengthened my heart and put my hand on the symbol. At that moment, electricity flowed through my body. A shock incomparable to when I obtained Absolute Soul roared inside me.

A skill that raised my league just by obtaining it! What the hell did I make!?

[You obtained the Transcendent skill, Overlord.]

[A supreme being whose existence suppresses all. Once per day, for 5 minutes, you equip an armor made of the black amorphous mana 'Enigma'. Your mana also becomes unionized with Enigma, transforming you into a 5 meter tall giant. 'Enigma' is a mana that reigns over all mana. Being so rare that not even a proper name could be given, this ultimate mana is said to stand on the opposite side of divine power. Enigma affects even your weapons, granting you the ability to enlarge them up to 20 times by will and dying them with black mana.]

[As no being can completely analyze this mana, your attacks become unpredictable and no attacks can display their full potential against you. While this skill is active, your HP and MP triples, and your stats double. When attacking the enemy, you have a 10% chance to afflict a random highest rank status effect. When attacked by an enemy, you have 20% chance to afflict a random highest rank status effect.]

[Learning Overlord increases all of your stats by 30 points. Overwhelm and Absolute Soul becomes level 5. Even while Overlord is not active, you are affected by a part of its effect. Your HP and MP increases by 20%, and with a 1% chance when attacking an enemy and a 2% chance when being attacked by an enemy, you afflict a random highest rank status effect.]

[This skill has transcended the control of the dungeon. It cannot be further synthesized. To create a skill above this skill, you must reach a realm higher than your current realm.]

[You created a Transcendent skill! Transcendent skills are skills born under the dungeon's system, yet transcending the

dungeon's system. Even existences capable of ignoring the dungeon's influence cannot look down on this skill. Just by possessing this skill, all worlds' enemies will be on guard against you. The Lord sends his highest praise at this amazing achievement. You obtained 10 skill points. Current skill points: 20]

“... Aaa.”

I exclaimed dumbfounded. As I carefully went over the flurry of messages, I interpreted what this skill, Overlord, meant. The conclusion I reached was simple.

I finally obtained it.

“A way to defeat the world's enemy!”

I had finally done it! A way to fight against them! A power not weaker than a god's power, the greatest power I could wield! Perhaps it was the time limit, perhaps it was because I had incorporated all the skills I could, or perhaps it was my unnaturally high luck stat. I had no way of knowing. However, I knew one thing for sure.

By obtaining Overlord, I had taken a step forward towards the future I had to protect!

When I left Beyond's 15th floor, Loretta received me with a blank expression. Now that I learned Overlord, I could just barely begin to understand the tip of the power within Loretta's body. She was

so powerful that I could only barely wound her after using Overlord.

In other words, she was already a Transcendent that could wield Enigma as if it was her own. That was why I couldn't see through the power all this time. After all, there was no way for me to estimate the strength of someone who wielded a power on a completely different dimension.

“Shin-nim, recently, you've been changing every time I see you. It's making me very flustered. Um, you... defeated it?”

“Yes.”

At Loretta's question that simplified what happened, I gave a quick reply as I struggled to estimate the total amount of Loretta's unfathomable power. After thinking for a bit, Loretta asked.

“The power inside you... Do you know what it is?”

“Yes.”

At Loretta's question, which implied that she already saw through my new skill and power, I once again answered briefly. Loretta then sighed, seemingly from relief. Then, she asked as she stole a glance.

“... Should I congratulate you?”

“Yeah.”

Seeing that Loretta’s tone had gotten brighter, I gave up trying to estimate Loretta’s power and answered. Immediately, she continued.

“Then, tonight, together in my cabin...”

“No thanks.”

“I didn’t even finish! Shin-nim, stupid! Stupid, stupid!”

Loretta flapped her ears endlessly as she shouted. I replied with a grin.

“Like I said, I can’t until I defeat the world’s enemy.”

“But! But! When you reject me so cold-heartedly, my heart tears up into a thousand pieces!”

“You shouldn’t ask when you know you’re going to get rejected.”

“I thought you’d go with the flow and go for it!”

“I hope you realize it’s not working because you’re too scheming.”

“Hiing...”

Loretta drooped her ears as she made a tearful face. I grinned and patted her.

“But as promised, we can play for today. I’m feeling a lot more relaxed now.”

“Okay. Should we start with strip poker?”

“Bye, Loretta!”

“Aaaah! I’m kidding! Play with me!”

Seeing Loretta hanging onto my legs, I announced my surrender. I then really ended up spending the whole day with her. Of course, we didn’t play strip poker.

... Really!

Chapter 218. What's a Hero Anyways? (4)

When I came back to the guild house after finally freeing myself from Loretta, I met Hwaya who looked unusually happy.

“Hwaya?”

“Shin! Listen, I became a Dimensional Mercenary!”

After hearing her, I checked and saw that she had become a First Dungeon Gold rank explorer. Before I climbed up to the 65th floor, I had heard that she was near the end of the 79th floor. Before I noticed, she had broken become a Platinum rank in the Second Dungeon and had advanced to the First Dungeon.

If she became a Dimensional Mercenary, it meant she had obtained the magic she lacked, Dimensional Travel. In other words, she had defeated the 50th Floor Master Wendigo alone. Of course, it wasn't surprising as Hwaya should have been the ice-wielding Wendigo's natural enemy. In fact, it might have been killed the moment the fight began.

In any case, after reporting to me, Hwaya shouted energetically.

“Let's go take on a Dimensional Mercenary mission! With just us two~!”

“My Dimensional Travel still has over a month long cooldown.”

“Can’t you do something about that with your skill points and will?”

“Nope.”

“Tsk.”

She clicked her tongue openly. Then, she suddenly tilted her head as she stared at me.

“Shin, did you change somehow?”

“Oh, I just obtained a new skill. A pretty good one.”

“Mm, for that to be true, you look more than a little stronger... Hmph, I’ll surpass you when I obtain a god’s true name. Got it?”

Hwaya really was sensitive to mana. Seeing Hwaya clenching her fists, I replied with a smile.

“Yeah, I hope you do.”

“Uuu, that way of talking... Whatever, join me for a drink. You won’t refuse this too, right?”

“That doesn’t have a cooldown time.”

It seemed I wouldn't be able to enter the dungeon again today. As I followed Hwaya who led me forward excitedly, I made a bitter smile. Well, I could just rest today and work harder tomorrow!

The next day, around noon, I messaged Lebuik.

“How was it?”

[... H-H-How what?]

“Seeing from your reaction, it looks like Ren took my advice.”

I didn't want to think this, but perhaps Ren really was an idiot. No, perhaps he was Ren because he was an idiot!

With a smirk, I interrogated Lebuik.

“What happened?”

[H-H-How can I tell anyone that! Not... Not that anything happened.]

“... Eh?”

Not believing my ears, I asked again.

“Nothing happened?”

[Y-Yeah. We just slept in each other's arms.]”

“... You want me to believe that?”

[What else was I supposed to do!? I was already frozen from nervousness! In fact, I deserve praise for being able to be with Ren-nim for that long without fainting!]

“Ah...”

Can a grown-up woman and man just sleep together in bed without doing anything? Well, I guess if they were tired... No, even so...

“Just when I gave you the perfect opportunity...”

[Rather than that, I'm more worried that Ren-nim slept so peacefully... He must not see me as a woman...]

“Geez, that doesn't matter. You should just...”

[Can I tell the other girls what you just said?]

“No, please save me. I'm trying to help Lebuik here! Also, I'm different from Ren!”

“Hmph, that’s what you get for speaking as if it’s easy. But still, thanks...]

“Ehew, good luck.”

Not knowing what to say, I hung up. Regardless of what happened, with this, she should have gotten closer to Ren. I predicted that Ren would start visiting Lebuik’s bedroom more often. Then, one day...

Although I would need to wait longer until the day I ate banquet noodles came, the current situation wasn’t so bad. With that thought, I went back to the dungeon.

The 66th floor surprisingly had bats once again. I could easily predict what monsters I would face. Though I couldn’t confirm my suspicion as the 66th floor only had bats, I knew someone who could tell me the answer.

“Yep, you’re right. It’s the incubus.”

“I knew it!”

After reaching the 66th Floor Shop in just one hour and a half, I could get a confirmation from Loretta. Filling up 10 floors with just bats and Mares, isn’t that being too cheap? Kuhum, I mean, it’s true that just sending out succubi is unfair.

“Resistance against charming is very important. It’s something

both male and female explorers need to possess.”

“That’s true. I’ve been seeing the charm stat in a new light recently, but still... incubi...”

“Uhuhuhu, you want to know what happens to female explorers charmed by incubi?”

“No!”

I blocked my ears, and Loretta made a cute smile and replied.

“They only get their life force and mana drained to death. For the record, it’s the same for male explorers who get charmed by succubi. Shin-nim just never got to experience it. The dungeon is a place to help explorers grow, not a place to toy with their hearts and body. Are you perhaps disappointed?”

“My friends are climbing the First Dungeon too. My sister and daugh... Ina included!”

“Oh? Hohoho, aren’t you glad I let you know before you started worrying profusely?”

Loretta made an awkward smile and looked away. Though I gave her a glare, it was true that I considered joining the girls if needed. Relieved, I left for Beyond.

Beyond's 16th floor had the Dullahans... Right, Dullahans, plural.

[Human, fight me one on one with honor!]

[Are you a knight? Fight me!]

With over a hundred so-called knights asking for 'fair' fights, I gave up on fighting fairly immediately. Since I knew I would face Dullahans, I already had a plan in mind. Resolved to stay on the 16th floor for a long time, I initiated my plan – setting things on fire.

“Haaaaaaaaa!”

After enveloping my Chaotic Spear with a whirlpool of chaos flames, I shot it forward. Of course, just once wasn't enough. With everything that happened, I had over 110,000 mana. I swept through the entire floor by pouring in mana to create chaos flames.

[Kak!]

[These flames!]

[Outburst!]

Hit by the chaos flames, the Dullahans panicked. They didn't even think to charge through the wall of flames, as they tried to attack me with their skills.

However, the rock shards created by Outburst became tiny fragments as they burned up when they passed through the chaos flame wall. By the time they hit me, they were no different than ant bites.

“Wait, what’s that?”

[Kuaaaaaa!]

A strange scene entered my eyes, and I shook. The floor’s special property! I’d been looking down on the 16th floor’s special property! On the 15th floor, monsters split when they hit the walls, and even the Dragon Zombie’s bone spears multiplied and shot out. The 16th floor’s, on the other hand, fused everything that hit it. For example, the rock shards that fell to the ground after hitting me returned to floor and restored the hollowed walls.

The reason I used the term ‘fuse’ instead of ‘absorb’ was because even the chaos flames I shot out fused with the floor. The entire floor became hotter and was dyed in a more reddish-black color. If every magic and techniques I used transformed the floor’s environment, it was possible for me to be hurt by my own attacks.

That said, I was thankful that I found out about this now rather than when I used a different attack. Although chaos flames burned indefinitely, they could never hurt the me, their creator.

[Kuaaak! Painful!]

[Extinguish this flame! If you're a knight, fight me fair and square!]

“You shouldn't say that when there's over a hundred of you!”

Even though I didn't do anything, the floor affected by chaos flames caused the Dullahans to writhe in pain until they died.

It seemed that they realized that the chaos flames would disappear if I died, as they charged at me. However, I had no fear for the Dullahans without Outburst. I simply fought them altogether with Lightning Spear Storm and used Heroic Strikes with chaos flames to finish them off.

[He's strong! Attack with Outburst!]

[But if we do, the walls will fuse again...!]

[Knights don't fear death! Knights only fear cowardly defeats!]

It seemed the walls' fusion property didn't activate randomly. In the first place, everything was designed to give the monsters an advantage. The fusion took place when the Dullahans used Outburst. I understood that through their conversation, and seeing the thousands of rock shards caused by the Dullahans that didn't fear death, I created specially large chaos flames without hesitation.

[Kuaaaak!]

[Coward!]

[I might die here, but I didn't lose!]

To be honest, it was stupid.

Regardless, because chaos flames spread across the whole floor, I broke through Beyond's 16th floor by simply running for 5 hours, all the while thinking that this might be a new record.

After leaving Beyond, I drank the 10 gold worth Fatigue Recovery Juice as I always did and headed to the guild house. Surprisingly, Yua was there as well.

"Yua, shouldn't you be at school?"

"Oppa, it's 9 P.M."

"Eh?"

I checked the clock, and it really was 9. With how much time I've been spending in the dungeon, I seemed to have lost my sense of time. With a bitter smile, I patted Yua who approached me.

"My bad."

“Wasn’t Oppa going into Beyond? What happened?”

“Mm, well, I got lucky, so I finished it quickly.”

“Oppa really is amazing...”

Nice! I raised Yua’s respect for me naturally!

“Oppa, I became Gold rank today.”

“Already!?”

She defeated the Wendigo!? Of course, Yua must have grown stronger, but the Wendigo’s freezing energy shouldn’t have been so easy to deal with... In shock, I examined Yua from head to toe. Yua then spoke with a hint of embarrassment.

“I’m fine, Oppa. I’m not hurt.”

“Really?”

“The Floor Shop owner treated me kindly and sold me equipment to deal with the freezing energy for a cheap price. Our guild is really amazing.”

“Uh, yeah.”

Loretta must have done something in the background... Since I didn't want to ruin Yua's good mood, I chose to stay silent.

However, I soon noticed Yua staring at me intently, almost as if she wanted to ask something of me, but was hesitating.

“Um... Oppa.”

“If there's anything you want, tell me. For you, I can even pluck the moon.”

I was truly confident in being able to do so. Although it would be difficult to pluck both moons, Earth's original moon should be possible if I use all my power...! However, Yua laughed and shook her head.

“I'm happy with just looking at the moon. We don't have anywhere to put it anyways.”

“Right.”

“Instead... You see, I want to tame monsters other than mantises. I know I can get stronger than way... If Oppa is busy, it's fine, but when you have time... can you go with me to monster territories on Earth?”

I replied without a shred of hesitation.

“Actually, Oppa’s been planning on taking care of a few monster territories. How’s a week later?”

“Really? I love you, Oppa!”

Just like that, the reclaiming of the Philippines began.

Author’s note:

I know many people don’t like Yua, but it’s necessary for the story so please bear with it. This author has put in too much personal taste for this character, so I can only apologize. But still...

Yua’s cute!

Yua’s cute!!

Yua’s cute!!!

Chapter 219. What's a Hero Anyways? (5)

Even if Yua needed to tame new monsters, I couldn't delay my dungeon progress to make time for it. Of the 2 year time period, a month had already passed.

However, there was a way to hunt monsters on Earth and not slow down the dungeon progress. That was the period of time where I needed to grind Floor Masters, during which I had free time once I finished my daily grind. Since the 65th Floor Master was a Succubus Queen, the 70th Floor Master was likely the Incubus King. Even if he was three times stronger than the Succubus Queen, I still had the confidence to defeat him in under 5 minutes. Even if I took an hour to rest between the fights, I only need 1 hour and 50 minutes to grind him 10 times. In other words, I would have about 22 hours of free time. It was more than enough time to take care of Earth's monsters or travel to Mars and back.

Telling Yua to wait a week was the same as declaring that I would reach the 70th floor in a week. This was possible for a simple reason. The First Dungeon posed no problem for me whatsoever, and Beyond floors' property was also helping me.

To be fair, I was a bit worried about the Grim Reaper. He was one of the most difficult Floor Masters I fought. However, with the terrain property helping me, it seemed doable.

[Guooooo!]

[Hateful human, do you not know the word 'fair'!]

“That’s what I want to ask you bastards.”

After breaking through the First Dungeon’s 67th floor in the blink of an eye, I immediately charged into Beyond’s 17th floor. There, I thoroughly scorched the Dullahans. While they possessed powerful skills and tough bodies, they seemed to have left their ability to learn and manners at home. It was the first time I was able to sweep Beyond’s floor so easily. Against the Orc Lords, I really had to use my brain.

[You cleared Beyond’s 17h floor. You obtained the qualification to challenge the First Dungeon’s 68th floor.]

[You obtained 5 bonus stats. Your maximum HP and MP increase by 2%.]

[Experience has been added to skills you frequently used to progress through Beyond’s 17th floor.]

[You mastered high rank Martial Arts Technique! Your body and mana reaches a perfect harmony. Positive effects will be added to all actions done with your body. All physical attack damage and speed increases by 20%.]

[Although you have the groundwork to create a higher martial path, you cannot create a new technique yet due to your lack understanding in Martial Arts.]

“Oh!”

The only thing I did on the 17th floor that could be considered Martial Arts was kicking the heads that flew at me. I only did it out of annoyance as the Dullahans literally used their heads when I said they didn’t try to use their head. I didn’t think it would lead to

this!

I especially liked Martial Arts Technique as it affected other abilities and skills. I didn't think I would master it so quickly, but I couldn't complain, as the 20% increase to physical attack damage and speed applied to my Spear Technique.

However, it suspected that it would be difficult or even impossible to create a higher Martial Arts Technique. I had only learned and honed what was passed down in the family and having had experience with creating Mad Typhoon, I couldn't even begin to understand how to create a new Martial Arts Technique.

"I'm getting stronger. It really feels like the best way to move has been ingrained on my mind."

20% increase to attack power and speed. Although it looked simple in numbers, in truth, it only meant that I could more skillfully draw out the power hidden in my body. Mastering a skill by Beyond's skill experience enhancement was great, but I still needed time to thoroughly understand the change. Of course, as I didn't have much time, I would have to get used to it through brawling with monsters.

"Alright, let's bring Lotte and head to the 68th floor!"

I gave a spirited shout and jumped into the gate. Being able to focus solely on the dungeon was a refreshing feeling!

After finishing our joyride through the 68th floor, I sent Lotte back to the mansion and was about to jump into Beyond's 18th floor. At that moment, I received a message. As it was a man's voice, I thought it was Ren or Father, but when I heard the entire message, I froze in front of the gate to Beyond.

[It's been a while, friend.]

Right, I was thinking it was about time I was interrupted... Someone didn't want me to just freely climb the dungeon! After letting out an inaudible sigh, I opened my mouth.

"It's been a while, Ellos."

How many months had it been? From what I remember, the last time I talked to Ellos was when Ludia and Shuna went with Ellos' party to defeat the 40th Floor Master. Immediately after that, Ludia's Luka continent was...

When I contacted Ellos after everything had been taken care of, he didn't pick up. After obtaining an ability after coming to Earth, Ludia could climb the dungeon with just Shuna so there was no problem, but we were both worried about being unable to contact Ellos. After all, he was the first friend I made in the dungeon.

"I was worried sick. I knew you weren't dead because you didn't disappear from my friend list, but..."

[Haha, sorry. A lot... happened.]

Just like always, he sounded calm and collected. If he was gone for a few months, he must have been so busy that he could barely sleep, but his voice did not show any such signs.

“Is everything taken care of?”

[Yeah. We stopped the invader’s major attack. The Hero survived too somehow.]

“That’s great.”

[Yeah... It’s great that you and Palludia are alive too. I’ll see you later. We can defeat a Floor Master together or something.]

“Haha, yeah, hurry up.”

I knew it would be impossible to party with Ellos. Even so, I encouraged him fully. Ellos probably didn’t think that I could have reached the 70th floor in just a few months.

Although not a long time had passed, many things had changed. Thinking about everything that happened, I was about to say goodbye.

Ellos, however, seemed to have something else to say.

[I heard you became a Dimensional Mercenary.]

“Hm? Oh, yeah, you knew?”

[I’m really proud to be your friend. I respect you as a friend too... When you’re free, can you come to my continent? We’re currently preparing a final offensive to drive away the invaders.]

“When my Dimensional Travel cooldown time ends, I’ll be more than happy to go.”

[Haha, thanks. You couldn’t be more reliable.]

It seemed the war between the Edias continent and its invader was coming to an end. Unlike the Luka continent and the Panan continent, the Edias continent seemed to have the power to resist and was even winning by the sound of it. Perhaps, there were warriors as powerful as me fighting alongside the Hero.

If Ellos’ world could drive away the world’s enemy, it was a cause for celebration. If I couldn’t give them a hand, I would be even happier. I inwardly placed a Dimensional Mercenary mission on reserve and jumped into Beyond’s 18th floor feeling refreshed.

[Foolish human.]

[Why must you give yourself to death?]

As expected, I ran into Grim Reapers filling up a wide

passageway.

The Grim Reaper possessed several abilities. They were skilled in handling their large scythes, shot aura waves, shot dozens of small scythes, and even blinked behind me suddenly. The Death Roar they used doubled the undeads' attack and halved the livings' defense. They could even make scythes pop up from the ground. I really wanted to ask, couldn't they have conquered a world by themselves? Not to mention, they were even stronger in Beyond.

[We shall guide you to death.]

[Come with us.]

“Who'd want to go with you floating hobos!?”

I prepared myself for what was to come, leaving everything to continued use of Divine Speed and mana recovery through Absolute Soul. The Grim Reapers teleported like ghosts from horror movies and sent aura waves flying toward me. Using Ruyue's power to block them, I flew up.

[Die!]

In the next moment, a Grim Reaper appeared behind me and swung his scythe. However, the cape hanging on my back immediately fluttered and hit the scythe away. Although the Grim Reapers' sudden blink attack was the most annoying attack, it was considered an ambush. As such, Felixes' Chaotic Cape nullified it

with its anti-ambush effect.

“You’re first! Heroic Strike!”

[Kiaaaaa!]

The spear I thrust out penetrated the reaper’s body. Although small scythes shot out, they were easily blocked by my armor. They didn’t work either! Even though the Grim Reapers had gotten stronger, my increase in strength had more than made up for it!

With an evil grin, I twisted the spear which was still stuck inside him. The reaper instantly became particles of light and scattered into the air. Just a single Heroic Strike with a normal amount of mana could kill a reaper.

[This human is resisting.]

[Foolish!]

After sending one reaper away, I turned to the others. In the air, dozens of large scythes were slashing down towards me.

“Don’t you get tired?”

I quickly dodged and the scythes also struck the ground. The passageway immediately began to transform. The floor, which was made of stone-like material, became metallic and sharp spikes

protruded out, making it impossible to step foot on the ground. Of course, I didn't believe that the spikes would stay on the ground forever.

The Grim Reapers shouted together.

[As you rejected a comfortable death, you shall face a cruel gruesome death!]

[Kuaaaaaaaaa!]

[Grim Reaper uses Death Roar! Absolute Soul, Overwhelm, and high charm nullifies Death Roar!]

[What!?!]

[O-Our roar...!]

I was also surprised. I didn't think I could completely nullify Death Roar. I thought only worlds' enemies could ignore the dungeon's skills. However, not only did I nullify the debuff from Death Roar, I even nullified the self-buffing part of Death Roar. Wait... then was it the same for Orc Lord's Warcry...?

[His league... A truly lofty league...!]

[Overwhelming Grim Reapers... Is this man human!?]

The reapers also seemed shocked as they froze in the air. I didn't miss the opportunity and used Elemental Tempest and Sacrifice.

[Kuaaaaak!]

[You... You are the dungeon's...!]

The reapers disappeared muttering things I couldn't understand. After absorbing elemental power, the passageway began to glow in a five-colored light and shot out its spikes. However, with no reapers attacking me, dodging them was piece of cake. I quickly weaved through the spikes and flew across the passageway, murmuring.

“If I'm this much, the world's enemy... I need to get stronger.”

I was no longer the kid that didn't know anything. Now that I could fathom the enemy's power, I could set a clearer goal for myself.

Although the dungeon was powerful, it undoubtedly had a limit. Perhaps, what the dungeon wanted from me was to surpass the power it bestowed me. Overlord, gods' true names, and Absolute Soul. These were all ways to accomplish that.

Although I should be happy, I wasn't. With a stiff expression, I progressed through Beyond, believing that someone beyond the dungeon could answer my questions.

Four days later, I reached the First Dungeon's 70th floor. It was two days earlier than the promised day with Yua.

Chapter 220. What's a Hero Anyway? (6)

[Another man...]

“You’re too honest!”

The 70th Floor Master was, unsurprisingly, the Incubus King. With stylish clothes and handsome features, he indeed possessed looks that could capture any women.

Although his high charm could affect both men and women, I was unaffected thanks to my high charm.

[I do not enjoy fighting. I would rather whisper into the ears of beautiful women.]

“Yeah, yeah, I get it. You’re a creep. Come.”

[I especially hate men who give off enticing scents like you! They steal my women!]

“Mind your own business!”

The Incubus King charged at me with an ornate longsword. When he swung his sword, thousands of ice spears appeared in the air. If anything, I had to recognize his boundless mana.

[My ice spear will penetrate you!]

“Can you stop making everything lewd!? Also, I’ll be the one penetrating you with my ice spear!”

I smirked and charged forward. At the same time, Ruyue flew up. In her beast girl appearance, Ruyue shouted.

[Anyone who bullies Shin, I’ll teach you a lesson!]

Immediately, the thousands of ice spears flying toward me halted. Then, along with Ruyue’s hand gestures, some became bigger and some combined with others. The Incubus King waved his sword around with a shocked expression, but it was too late. He had completely lost control of his ice spears.

[A mere elemental dares to go against me!]

“If you look away, you’ll die!”

Not that he wouldn’t die if he didn’t look away. While he staring at the ice spears in the air, I used Divine Speed and shot a Heroic Strike wrapped in chaos flames. The attack drilled into his shoulder and created a huge hole.

[Kuaaaaak! My noble body!]

“Didn’t the other men that went through here do the same thing?”

[Are you looking down on me for being restrained by the dungeon? You're no better, a mere human being played by fate!]

In his rage, the Incubus King charged towards me. I grinned and held up my spear.

Chaos flames and white aura mixed together, burning in a hard to describe form. I then charged toward the Incubus King fuming with a navy demonic energy.

“Go to hell with your fate bullshit!”

At the same time, hundreds of ice spears strengthened by Ruyue descended. The Incubus King swung his sword and created a barrier. He then used magic to break the incoming ice spears, but his face was grim, as if he already knew he would lose.

He wasn't wrong. He had already used quite a lot of his mana to create the ice spears. When it failed, his defeat was only a matter of time.

[Human, human, humaaaaaan! Despair! Surrender to fate! Become a loser and forever slumber in resentment!]

“Stop talking about yourself!”

The ice spears then broke through his barrier and struck his

body. His beautiful clothes became shredded as his limbs also became severed. Coincidentally, only his face remained unhurt.

[Kuhuk... I won't forget you!]

The Incubus King coughed out black blood and glared at me. I struck my spear into his face and replied.

“Bullshit to the end. Even when I see you Floor Masters 10 times a day, none of you remember me.”

[A Grand Achievement! You defeated the Floor Master, 'Incubus King', alone! Amazing!]

[You became level 71. You obtained the qualification to challenge Beyond's 20th floor.]

[You obtained 5 bonus stats.]

[You obtained the title, 'Incubus King Slayer'. All stats permanently increase by 1. This effect will apply even if the title is not equipped.]

[You became Gold Rank 2. Congratulations.]

[You defeated the Incubus King alone. You obtained the special reward, 'Superior Incubus King's Top.']

[You obtained 500,000 gold.]

[Choose your reward.]

[1. Captivation Magic Book.]

Unlike the Succubus Queen, it seemed somebody had already claimed the first reward for the Incubus King. In other words, an explorer who had been bewitched and killed by the Succubus

Queen had slain the Incubus King in cold blood. Incubus King, you poor guy...

Regardless, the solo kill reward was the important thing. Captivation Magic Book. Another item beyond my expectations had come out. I couldn't refuse the reward either. Thinking I might need to learn to control my charm again, I sighed as I chose the reward.

[You learned the passive skill Captivation. Captivation strengthens your charm. At level 1, it increases your charm by 10%. Against members of the opposite sex, your charm will have double the effect.]

"I knew it."

If this effect multiplied the amplification I got from the Succubus Queen's Tattoo, then my charm would have quadruple the effect to females. Even if the effect worked additively, it would still be triple. Since the skills I obtained from the dungeon all worked additively, my charm most likely tripled instead of quadrupling. The 60th through 70th floor really increased explorers' charms. Hwaya must love it.

Regardless, since my charm reached a troublesome realm once again, I had to control my charm before I headed out to the Floor Shop.

"Welcome back, Shin-nim... Uuu, your charm increased again!"

“If you want to resent someone, Loretta, resent the one who made the dungeon like this.”

“Why would I resent anyone? I’m fine as long as Shin-nim doesn’t go around seducing women. In fact, I have to thank the Lord for this!”

“At least you’re honest...”

At my wry smile, Loretta puffed out her chest proudly.

“Being honest is my good point! Then, Shin-nim, now...”

“See you later.”

“I knew you’d say that. I hate you!”

Leaving Loretta behind, I went back into the Floor Master room to fight the Incubus King again. To implement my plan in time, I had no choice but to work hard.

Two hours afterward, at the guild house on Earth, I checked the guild members who wanted to participate in this expedition. I had already notified everyone on the day I talked to Yua, and after I cleared the 70th floor earlier than expected, I told whoever coming along to finish their preparations by today.

The result was that it would be faster to count the number of

people not here. No, wait...

“... Everyone’s here?”

“We’re going to reclaim a country. Isn’t it obvious that we’d come?”

Hwaya spoke as everyone’s representative. She was wearing formal attire and was holding a long silver stick in one hand. She stood next to a empty wall, ready to give a presentation.

Michel and Leon also nodded.

“She’s right. I joined Revival because I believed we would drive away the monsters from Earth. This is the first step. There’s no way I can miss it.”

“Well said, old man! Besides, if I don’t help, I’ll feel weird receiving help to reclaim Texas or California.”

“Kuu, having California taken by them was indeed a great catastrophe...”

“Haha, it’s fine, it’s fine! Although we can’t bring the dead back to life, lost lands can always be reclaimed!”

Over 10% of U.S. population lived in California. When Two Moon occurred, a large scale monster attack decimated half of

California's population. Even those who survived had lost their families, properties, and hopes of living.

"We'll go to California soon, so don't worry, Leon."

"I believe you, friend!"

"Shush."

Hwaya silenced us and projected a screen onto the wall.

"The place we're going to today is the Philippines."

"Philippines..."

"Because of monsters, 90,000,000 people lost their lives in the Philippines. That's 90% of their population. It was one of humanity's greatest catastrophes. "

"I've seen a satellite image. It's full of vegetation like it has traveled back in time."

"It's possible that it's part of another world's natural environment. Even if you've been to the Philippines before, don't think the Philippines we're about to go to is the same Philippines as the past."

Hwaya spoke with a stern tone and pointed to the Philippines on the screen's map. Then, a few pictures popped up on the screen. Tall trees and dense vegetation made it look like we were looking at a scene from the Jurassic Period. Inside the forests, we could see giant monsters roaming about.

“They're pictures taken during the Philippines during the catastrophe. At the time, three SS rankers including me fought against the monsters there. Back then, we had to retreat without even killing 10% of the monsters in the coast. Like the other occupied countries, Philippines' monsters are rather high ranked. The weakest are A ranks with 60% being S rank, 10% being SS rank, and 1% being... above that.”

“Only that...? Ow!”

“Don't look down on others just because you're strong.”

Ludia hit my head. I reflected.

“They might have gotten even stronger by now. We can probably safely assume that most monsters had a half rank increase. The succubi battle units recovered most of the islands other than the mainland, and their reports prove that this is true.”

“Right. The monsters there were unusually strong. Dear Husband, this Philippines... I think there's something in its center region. I felt a powerful aura that made me tremble.”

“It could be a commander level monster. In any case, this operation can’t be done without Shin. As you know, Shin, your Evil Eyes will be important.”

“Leave it to me.”

I could petrify all monsters below SS rank without having to use mana. However, as monsters with relatively high ranks could naturally cancel the petrification over time, we had to go through the process of shattering their petrified bodies.

Hwaya then showed us more pictures of the Philippines, explaining the monsters endemic to the area. With the Philippines being an island nation, even coastlines had powerful oceanic monsters. As for deeper inland, there were many powerful mammalian monsters, insect monsters, and harpy type monsters. There really were monsters of all sorts.

“There’s also the matter that served as the how this operation started – finding elite monsters for Yua. Daisy, you stop drooling.”

“Good monster are, dead monster.”

“Your definition of dead monsters is undead monsters.”

“Meki, strong because dead. Other mantis, weak because alive.”

“Is Meki the name you gave to the Evil Mantis Queen?”

“Kang Shin, smart student...!”

While I smacked Daisy’s head, Hwaya’s explanation was reaching its end.

“We’ve already explained the situation to Guardian and Freedom Wing. The media will talk about us around dinner time. There are some volunteers from various agencies...”

“Reject everyone under SS rank.”

“That’s everyone then.”

Hwaya burned away some of the papers in her hand. Now that I thought about it, the only SS rankers not part of Revival were the ones we made into First Dungeon explorers. They were undoubtedly still busy climbing the dungeon.

Once the papers in her hand became cinders, Hwaya’s expression became serious.

“Let me confirm one last time. We aren’t forcing anyone to participate in this operation. If you’re unsure of your abilities...”

While Snorting, Ludia retorted.

“You might want to go with Shin alone, but I won’t let that

happen.”

“Tsk, even if I wanted to, sister-in-law is coming anyways...”

Hwaya turned away and grumbled. Yua tilted her head and asked Hwaya.

“Sister-in-law? What does that mean? My understanding of this must be wrong... Can you tell me?”

Scary. And cold! Thinking perhaps it was just me, I looked at Hwaya who was a SSS rank flame ability user. Seeing how she was also trembling, it seemed the temperature around us had gone down.

“Yua, don’t be so scary. I want to get close to you. Why do you not like me?”

“There’s no way I don’t like you, Unni. Haha... So, what’s the other meaning of sister-in-law?”

Don’t bully Hwaya, Yua! Her life points have already hit zero!

“Reclaiming a country with just us... It’s almost like we’re superheroes from comic books.”

“You’re not wrong, Kang Yungoong. We’re this world’s heroes!”

“Shin, [Yungoong](#). What choices of names...”

“Who cares! Shin, Yungoon! What better describes them!?”

“Men, stop blabbering like idiots. We’re heading out now!”

All 17 members of Revival immediately set off to the Philippines.

From this moment on, we were the main characters of this heroic tale.

Shin means “god” and Yungoong means “hero” in Korean.

Chapter 221. Overlord (1)

The 17 members of Revival along with Plene, Lotte, and Licorice, totaling 20, got on Hwaya's private plane. As the succubi battle units were already in the Philippines, only we needed to go. For the record, Walker was the pilot, being unexpectedly skilled in many areas.

Among these members, not everyone was harmonious. In particular, although I hadn't been paying much attention, the monster members didn't get along.

"You vulgar bat, get off of Hero's lap."

"Are you stupid because you're bird-brained? This is where I belong, Dear Husband's lap. Stop squawking noisily and go away, wyvern. Your scales are getting in the way."

"I want to be next to Shin too..."

As Plene was weaker in both magical and physical abilities, she had the least say, while Lotte and Licorice fought fierce psychological battles. Strictly speaking, Lotte was weaker than Licorice. However, Lotte was still above Licorice in physical abilities.

Of course, I wasn't too happy with this arrangement. The fact that they were fighting over me was even more troublesome. The other girls already gave me a headache, but now even the monsters were joining in!

When I was just about to say something, a thin layer of ice spread over Licorice who was sitting on my laps.

“Kyaaak! What’s this!?”

“Daddy’s lap is mine.”

Ina pushed off the slightly frozen Licorice and plumped down on my laps. I widened my eyes and shouted.

“Ina! You can control your ice magic now!”

“A little bit. Did I do well, Daddy?”

“Yep, yep. Good job.”

“Kuk, Dear Husband abandoned me...”

“Serves you right, bat.”

“You go away. And you too, sparkly eyes.”

My daughter... My daughter was establishing order! Touched by Ina’s power to shoo the monsters away, I hugged Ina, who made cute noises.

Ah, of course, Yua was sitting in the window seat next to me.

“I wonder if my kids will be safe in the Philippines...”

Yua murmured in worry and looked out the window, though there were only clouds in sight.

“Are you talking about your mantises?”

“Yes, they’re still young... so I’m a bit worried.”

Although a few of them had died as they climbed the dungeon, most of the mantises survived and grew stronger with Yua. With the buffs Yua could cast as a Tamer, each mantis had power on par with an S rank monster. I couldn’t help but shiver thinking about how strong they would be when they fully grew up. Even now, they certainly weren’t weak.

“Don’t worry. They look all grown up to me.”

“They only got bigger in size. They’re still kids at heart.”

“It’ll be fine. Guys grow up by being apart from their mothers.”

“But there are more girls...”

“Really?”

I didn't know. Sorry, mantis girls.

In any case, they were live monsters and couldn't enter the inventory like Daisy's undead monsters. For when we needed to travel, we temporarily put them in the guild's resort, Resting Place of the Angels. Yua would then go back to the dungeon and bring them out when she needed them. Looking back, obtaining Resting Place of the Angels was god's work.

“We'll be there in thirty minutes. The succubi units cleared space for us to land, but with so many monsters are popping up from the ocean, they're apparently having trouble holding on. Get ready. Yua, make sure you bring out your mantises when you see an opportunity.”

“Yes, Unni.”

“Shin, are you ready?”

“Leave it to me.”

Seeing the effect of my Evil Eyes strengthened by charm, I was sure everyone would be stunned. With a grin, I initiated Peruta Circuit. The time to release the power I had been hiding was getting closer.

Twenty minutes afterwards, while the plane was still soaring through the sky, Hwaya shouted sharply.

“Attack incoming!”

The outside suddenly got noisier. At the same time, Hwaya did something, making the plane’s walls transparent as if we were floating in air. I mused, ‘Technology sure advances fast...’ However, now wasn’t the time for that. There were already monsters all around the plane.

Of the flying monsters in the Philippines, there were harpies, giant eagles and hawks, dinosaur-like monsters, flying insects, and even wyverns. I immediately thought of capturing a strong male to introduce him to Lotte, but I rejected the idea when I turned around and saw Lotte’s cold and terrifying gaze. Damn, could my tamed beasts read my mind!?

“An ambush by flying monsters. Daisy, can you take care of it?”

“Kana, already on it.”

Daisy answered confidently. Immediately afterwards, a ginormous tuna... like monster appeared in the air. I was wondering what monster Kana was. It was none other than Aikan, one of Daisy’s strongest undead monsters!

“Kana, learned transparency. Grew up well.”

Daisy strutted out chest and made a proud expression. I thought undead monsters couldn’t grow...? Regardless, it was amazing that

it learned a new skill. Unlike what I thought before, it seemed undead monsters could grow.

[Oooooooooong!]

Aikan cried reliantly. Just from that, some of the weaker monsters exploded. What a monster... Daisy's obtaining it in the Panan continent couldn't have been better.

“Kana, send them flying. Beam!”

The moment Daisy shouted, Aikan... no, Kana, opened its giant mouth and sucked in the surrounding air. Naturally, the nearby monsters couldn't overcome the suction force and was pulled into Kana's mouth. Most of the attacks towards Kana dissipated when they hit the light shooting out from Kana's body, and even the attacks that managed to get through the light couldn't penetrate Kana's skin. It seemed flying monsters could be just left to Kana.

[Guooooooooooooo!]

Finally, Kana shot out a giant pillar of light. Everything in its path was wiped clean, and as surrounding monsters moved to fill up the now empty space, it could clearly be seen that their numbers of thinning.

“I've heard the description, but that thing is too overpowered!”

“Kang Shin, almost won against Kana.”

“What do you mean ‘almost’? I did win!”

“Kang Shin fought, El Patiz. Can’t win against Kana.”

“You...”

While we quarreled, Kana leisurely took care of the rest of the monsters. With Kana guarding us, we safely landed on the coast.

“Dear Husband!”

“Dear Husband is here!”

When we got off the plane, the succubi fighting the monsters all turned to face me. I could feel the other girls poking me with narrowed eyes. I’m telling you, it’s not my fault!

“Is everyone off? Walker?”

“I’m here.”

After confirming that everyone had gotten off the plane, Hwaya stored the plane in her inventory. The monsters hurtling towards the plane changed their direction towards us, but were immediately shot down by the succubi’s magic.

“Dear Husband, we’re extremely sorry to say this, but can you participate in the battle? Many kids are lacking in mana, so they can’t handle the monsters properly!”

“Yeah, I’m going now!”

I immediately summoned Sharana and infused her into my body. Although I also summoned Ruyue and Peika, I didn’t infuse them in my weapons. Spirit Aura was only needed against monsters I needed to put in effort to defeat. Against a large number of enemies, I only needed Sharana, and the other elementals were better off in their materialized forms.

I soared into the air and shouted.

“Fight me!”

[You used Provoke! All enemies in the area charge in to kill you!]

This feeling, I had felt it before. It was probably in the Panan continent. The feeling when all beings in the world were staring at me and attacking me. It was the moment when my heart tightened the most.

“Die!”

In one go, I fully released all the charm I had been holding back. At that moment, even I felt an electrifying scent. While I was rather annoyed, my Evil Eyes, strengthened to the extreme by my

charm, radiated a powerful golden light and shone down on everything in my sight. In this regard, I couldn't be happier with my high charm. Furthermore...

Everything in the world became stone.

“My god...”

Hwaya murmured in a stiff voice. Everyone else also only stared at me speechless. I waved my hand and spoke.

“Sorry, I fully released my charm, so you shouldn't look at me for too long.”

“Un, right... but well, it's too late to try to ignore your charm, so don't worry.”

“Kuhum...”

Hwaya, striking at this moment... I blushed and looked away.

“Amazing! All monsters in this area was... Aaah, as expected of Dear Husband!”

Other than me, Revival's members, tamed monsters and the succubi battle units, all else had petrified with nothing spared.

Rocks rained down on the ocean, making fountains spout up everywhere. Likewise on the earth, loud noises rang out as rocks hailed down.

“Peika, can you destroy all the rocks that just fell down?”

[I don't want to go in the ocean... but okay, I got it.]

“Ruyue, you know what to do, right?”

[Leave it to me! Ice Rain!]

The two elementals each charged to their designated area and started to break the petrified monsters. Then, the others finally snapped out and started to work on breaking the monsters. They didn't forget to comment on what just happened.

“At this rate, can't we be done with the Philippines in just a day?”

“I won't be surprised if I get a Stone Breaker title. I've never experienced such boring monster hunting.”

“Hey you! Make sure you get everything on camera! We have to record Dear Husband's magnificent glory!”

“Yes, Queen!”

First, I stole the camera from the succubus taking Licorice's orders. Then, feeling the presence of monsters in the distance, I calculated the amount of time we had until they came to a threatening range and confined my charm again. The scent that was emanating from me died down noticeably. Wait, didn't that mean this scent could even be seen visually...!?

"You're not even human anymore, Son. Did you eat an air freshener?"

"Shut it, Dad."

I retorted curtly at the snickering Father, as I held my spear back up. At that moment, Daisy murmured in regret.

"Petrified monsters... can't make undead."

"Oh..."

That wasn't it. Yua also made a vague smile and spoke.

"Oppa, I can't tame monsters when they're petrified..."

"Oh, mm... right..."

I worked my brain helplessly. Then, I finally came up with an answer to solve this crisis.

“Let’s find a monster that’s strong enough to withstand my petrification!”

“Will there be one...?”

“I don’t know...”

Almost as if I used my Evil Eyes again, a somewhat unwelcome silence descended once again. Wanting to shake it off, I shouted energetically.

“Now, let’s do this! I’m sure there will be a monster willing to be Yua’s friend!”

“How irresponsible.”

“Undead... my undead.”

“Friend... will I find one...?”

What, you’re unhappy with my performance!? You’re not being honest!

Chapter 222. Overlord (2)

After taking care of the first wave of monsters gathered at the coast, only the dense forest stretching out to the horizon filled our eyes. The greenery truly extended to every corner of our eyes. No one would be surprised if a dinosaur's head suddenly popped up.

We had nowhere near enough time to thoroughly search every corner of Philippines for monsters. We couldn't waste time. Of course, we had come with a solution prepared.

“So I just sing songs that attract?”

“Yep. Just focus on singing. I'll take care of the rest.”

“Un!”

The solution was none other than Plene. To kill monsters with my Evil Eyes, I needed them to be within my sight. Although it would be nice if I could draw them towards me with Provoke, Provoke's range wasn't that big.

However, unlike my shouting, Plene's singing traveled far and wide like the sweet scent of flowers attracting honeybees. Plene had never accompanied me to Event Dungeons or Dimensional Mercenary missions, but now was her time to shine. Ah, come to think of it, she did shine before when Event Dungeons appeared on Earth.

“Lala~ Lalala~”

“What a beautiful voice.”

“Don’t get infatuated, Father. Snap out of it.”

Father looked like he was ready to crack open a beer bottle. I restrained father and strongly circulated Peruta Circuit. I could feel countless number of monsters coming over, attracted by Plene’s singing.

“Battle units, you guys can rest. You must be tired. If you want, you get even go back to Resting Place of the Angels.”

“Thank you for your consideration, Dear Husband, but we can regain our strength through battle!”

“Alright, then be on standby. You guys can help take care of the monsters unaffected by Evil Eyes.”

“Yes!”

To be honest, the succubi’s mind sharing ability was rather convenient. I could just grab one randomly and the rest would understand what I told her. That said, I wanted to decline their favorable impression of me from going up at the same time!

Everyone prepared their bodies and minds against the strong

enemies we would face. As I circulated Peruta Circuit and waited for the monsters in the distance to arrive, I thought about ways to effectively release my charm.

The strength, dexterity, and constitution stats directly affected my body, the magic stat was my mana itself. Although I wasn't sure what the luck stat did exactly, I could more or less control the other stats. I could display as much strength as I wanted and display as much speed as I wanted. If that wasn't possible, it would be impossible for explorers to live their everyday lives.

At first, I thought the charm stat was like the luck stat, something outside of my control. However, after experiencing many things, I came to realize that it was controllable. Then, it must be possible to control how much of it I used just like other stats.

Furthermore, if I could focus it to strengthen one part of my body, like the eyes for example, and stop releasing my charm through my whole body, I could get Hwaya and Ludia to stop looking at me with judgmental eyes. As such, learning to control my charm was one of my top priorities. After all, charm was a monster-like ability that could even demolish an ability user's self-control!

“Lala, lalala~! Laaa~!”

“They’re coming. I can feel it!”

“Would it be about 0.1% of the Philippines’ monsters?”

“I don’t know, but there sure are a lot!”

0.1%... So we only had to do this 999 more times? Although I tried to trick myself into thinking positively, I couldn’t help but sigh. Dealing with monsters on a scale of a country was no joke.

“Don’t sigh too much, Shin... I’m happy, it’s been a while since I did something with you since I can’t be with you in the dungeon.”

“I get it, so go away, Ludia. Your eyes are really dangerous right now.”

“Dear Husband is so strange. It is only natural for a man and a woman to embrace each other, why does he refuse it so adamantly?”

“For the first time, I agree with you, Licorice. Why don’t we exchange some ideas?”

“Sure, let’s cooperate, witch.”

I swear I’ll learn to focus my charm to only my eyes! If this continues, I’ll be conquered before I can conquer the Philippines!

In just four days, we managed to completely wipe out monsters from 40% of the Philippines. Although there were monsters powerful enough to resist Plene’s singing, they couldn’t hide their

presence from us. We just had to find them and kill them. These monsters could also resist my petrification. When I asked Daisy and Yua if they were interested, they shook their heads.

“Not this one either?”

“Not cute.”

“It’s not cute.”

“Is there some standard I don’t know about? Is it really because they’re not cute?”

We only had five hours to rest per day. I was the only one who thought it was too long. At first, everyone rolled their eyes and called me a tyrant.

“I know we’re on standby most of the time, but Shin, you’re always using your power. Are you okay?”

“Eh? You were worrying about me?”

As I planned on taking two hours out of that five hours to hunt Floor Masters, I couldn’t help but be flustered by Ye-Eun’s question. Were these people still doubting the power of explorers’ stats? I received the answer to my doubts the next morning.

“Strange. Why am I not tired?”

“Hmm, even after I became an ability user, I still felt sleepy from time to time... but now I’m not sleepy at all.”

“So this is the power of stats...!”

Wait, these people, were they in the dungeon for only eight hours a day like some office work? When I asked them, the others gave me stares that said, ‘What’s this monster?’ It seemed I was the weird one. Hwaya advised me seriously.

“Shin, I know you feel pressed for time, but there’s a certain level of stress you get just from battling. Without you even realizing, your mind is being hurt. You’re already getting stronger quickly, so don’t push yourself too much. Many of us here feel pain seeing you hurt.”

“Y-Yeah...”

Since she was genuinely worrying about, I couldn’t refute her even though I really didn’t feel anything. Feeling awkward from Hwaya’s stare, I nodded. In the end, I didn’t tell anyone I spent two hours hunting Floor Masters. Though, I suspected that a few of them already knew about it.

It was on the fourth day that something unexpected happened. During these four days, we went around the Philippines using Plene’s singing and my Evil Eyes to wipe out monsters. Before we noticed, the number of monsters swarming us decreased. It wasn’t that there were more monsters that could resist Plene’s singing.

“There should be more monsters the closer inland we get. How strange.”

“Dear Husband, I’ll get the kids to survey the area”

“Might die, dangerous. Undead, safe.”

Daisy stopped Licorice and took out a skeleton of a hawk from her inventory. Then, she put a small crystal ball in its eye socket.

“Scout.”

[Kiaaaa!]

The hawk cried and soared into the air. Its speed was incredibly fast. At the same time, Daisy took out another crystal ball that seemed like an enlarged version of the one she took out before.

“We can, see with this.”

“Wow, so we can use this to see what the hawk is seeing?”

“Floor Shop 770,000 gold. Revival privilege, 70,000 gold discount.”

Without me realizing, my name was being used here and there. I

told myself to apologize to Loretta next time I saw her, as I looked into the crystal ball. The hawk's incredible fast made it hard to see the surrounding scenery, but once I got used it, I could see the dense forested area around us.

For about five minutes, nothing was out of the ordinary. As we already cleaned up this area, there weren't any monsters that came into view. Although it would have been nice if that continued, Hwaya soon shouted.

“Wait, what's that?”

“Monster migration.”

Daisy answered with a shocked expression. She was right. A group, no a herd of monsters had finally entered the hawk's view. Strangely, they were all moving towards one direction. Land monsters were plowing through the forest, while flying monsters flapped their wings and cut through the sky. It was almost as if they were racing towards the same finish line.

“This is...”

“There really is a commander...”

Hwaya gulped. I could feel her voice trembling slightly. I understood why as one of the monsters running in the crystal ball was...

“Isn’t this the same type of monster as the one Yua hated?”

“Yeah, it’s the same monster as the one that didn’t get petrified. From how much mana it had...”

Sumire continued Hwaya’s murmuring.

“It was an SSS rank.”

“Ho.”

It was clear what that meant. There was no way an SSS rank monster would run like a dog playing catch for a monster weaker than itself. It meant that there was a monster that was overwhelmingly stronger than an SSS rank monster.

“A map, anyone?”

“Here you go, Hwaya-nim.”

One of the succubus handed Hwaya a 3D hologram map of the Philippines. Comparing the map with the scenery in the crystal ball, Hwaya estimated where the monsters were heading to.

“Luzon Island... southernmost area.”

Hwaya voice fell. Soon, she came up with an answer.

“Bulusan Volcano... They’re going to a volcano!?”

My instincts told me a monster my Evil Eyes couldn’t do anything against was there.

“It’s fine. I don’t know if there’s enough space there for all these monsters to gather, but this is more convenient for us. Let’s head over there while we take care of the slow ones.”

“No, we don’t know what will be there, Shin. Let’s split up our forces. I don’t know what the monsters are up to, but they’re certainly not trying to help you kill them all at once.”

That was true.

“Then let’s kill them before any more of them reaches the volcano.”

“We have six succubi battle units. We’ll split up and go with them. Shin, you go with Plene and kill as many of them as you can.”

“Got it.”

“Succubi, line up!”

The battle units immediately began to line up. The other

members of Revival also stood nervously at Hwaya's frosty vigor.

“There might be a monster stronger than any monster we've faced so far. You can't just rely on Shin to take care of everything. Make sure you're resolved!”

“Oh, my daughter candidate sure is feisty.”

“Father, you just scared other daughter candidates with that.”

“Guys, is the Philippines the only country with a monster like this?”

“Probably not...”

I couldn't help but recall the Demon Army Commander I met in the Luka continent. A monster far surpassing him was likely waiting for us. A monster that could control SSS rank monsters... how many monsters like this existed on Earth?

“So the real war is beginning... I'm shaking a bit.”

“Hmph, we just have to kill them. What, you're scared?”

At Michel's muttering, Walker snorted and replied. Michel grinned and retorted.

“Of course not. But since you’re so full of spirit, I’ll be expecting a lot from you.”

“Trying to act cool, old man?”

After splitting up into a total of seven teams, we set off. Our final destination was Luzon Island’s southernmost area, Bulusan Volcano. The battle was not far off.

Chapter 223. Overlord (3)

“Lala~ Lalala~”

“Dear Husband, I think we’re done with the monsters in this area.”

“There really aren’t many... Plene, it’s fine now.”

“Un!”

Plene, who was entertaining our ears and leading the monsters to their deaths, immediately stopped singing at my request. I sent out my elementals to shatter the petrified monsters as I looked around the area. Far in the distance, I could see a volcano shooting up into sky. Bulusan Volcano. As expected, it had grown to the point its original appearance was unrecognizable.

“Dear Husband, can you feel it? The breath of the fierce beast that’s hiding its presence.”

“Of course, now that we’re this close, I can feel it clearly.”

“This might be...”

Lotte, who was listening to our conversation, spoke out with a bit of hesitation. I turned to face her and asked.

“Do you recognize it, Lotte?”

“Have I not explained to Hero about them?”

“No.”

“I’ll keep it short and simple. There no humans in the world I came from. Only existences that humans call monsters lived there. Of the five major countries, there was a country centered around a volcano with its king commanding a powerful army.”

“And that’s...”

Lotte slowly nodded her head.

“I didn’t notice their special characteristic from any of the monsters we’ve seen so I didn’t say anything, but now that we’ve come this close, I can feel their auras. Even among us monsters, we wondered how the monsters in the army he commanded were so strong. Today, I have the feeling I’ll find out why... It’s making me rather anxious.”

“Ah, I heard about them too! Larva Immoral Leg, right?”

“It’s Lava Immortal Legion, idiot.”

“I lived in an island so I don’t know these things!”

Now that she mentioned it, Plene also came from the same world as Lotte. Seeing Plene yelling at Lotte, I patted her head and calmed her down.

“Plene’s doing fine, so don’t worry.”

“Ehehe...”

“This is why idiots are too easy to handle... Anyways, Hero, if the king is really here, even Hero’s guild members might not be safe. It’ll be best for only a selected few of them to fight him.”

“If we get rid of this king, we only have to deal with four others? That sounds like a deal to me.”

“It would be nice if that were the case...”

Lotte still looked uneasy. With how confident she usually was and this being the first time she was showing this side of her, even I began to worry.

“Losing the world’s power and being connected to Earth... It was certainly the five kings that commanded us. But I always thought that there was someone above them. I don’t know why and I can’t remember who it was, but I know someone was there.”

“That’s not too surprising. When there is huge gap between the leagues of two beings, it’s possible that the being of lower league can’t recognize the being of higher league even if they were facing

each other directly. Even if the being of lower league recognized the being of higher league, he'll forget once he turns around. These powerful existences can cause mental pressure just by being in someone's memories. That's why beings of lower league forget about them, to protect their minds."

"This is the first time I've heard that."

I replied to Licorice's explanation with a bitter smile and loosened my body by stretching. This unknown leader was most likely the world's enemy, but the one I had to worry about currently was the one waiting for us in the volcano.

"We already took care of the other areas. Once we clean up the Bulusan Volcano, we'll be done with the Philippines."

"Be careful, Dear Husband. The dungeon's power might not work on this guy."

"I have a plan even if that's the case. Don't worry, we got this."

After giving an encouraging talk, I opened the guild communication channel and reported.

[We're done. How about you guys?]

[We're almost done too!]

[Just wait a bit, friend!]

[Already? Your Evil Eyes are too overpowered. Hold on, we're finishing up too.]

[Almost done. Meki, doing work.]

[We encountered an SSS+ rank giant monster. Kang Yungoong is holding it back. If you're done, come help us, Kang Shin.]

It seemed Walker was having trouble as he gave a serious report. I immediately gave Lotte a glance. Even as she grumbled, she returned to her wyvern form, and Plene, Licorice and I immediately jumped on her back.

“Let's go take care of the SSS+ rank first.”

[I can feel its aura. I'll hurry!]

Lotte flapped her wings once, soaring up so quickly that the surrounding scenery seemed to warp. In just two minutes, we saw the giant monster Walker mentioned.

It was indeed a giant monster, as a 20 meter tall giant was wreaking havoc with its giant sword. A peculiarity was that its entire body was made of fire. No, that's... lava? The moment Lotte caught sight of the giant, she growled.

[It's as I thought, Hero. It's him! The king is in the Philippines!]

“That's the Lava Immortal Legion?”

[To be exact, it's the Lava Immortal Legion's Destroyer, a soldier in the forefront of their assaults.]

“Soldier? Not a commander, but a soldier?”

As if to say yes, Lotte accelerated. She really was ruthless. I immediately took out my Chaotic Spear. Although chaos flame was the strongest attribute I could wield, even the powerful chaos flame had a flaw. It was that it wasn't that effective against the fire attribute. So, for now...!

“Everyone hold on! Lotte, accelerate!”

[Leave it to me!]

“Oh, this isn't bad, Dear Husband!”

“Grab onto Lotte, not me!”

The ones fighting the Destroyer realized I had come and looked up at me. Although the Destroyer also found out, the vibration from the spear attack Father shot out caused a chunk of lava to fall off its leg.

[Grrrrrrruaaaa!]

“Ruyue, Sharana!”

[Un!]

Above my spear, a whirlpool of ice raged. In just 0.5 seconds, it would reach the enemy. Carrying the ice energy strengthened by absorbing the wind Lotte raised, the Chaotic Spear shot through the air. The tip of the spear was shining in white.

“Eat this!”

[Critical Hit!]

The moment Lotte crossed its body, the spear I thrust directly struck its shoulder. Lava and ice collided, causing steam to rise, while its shoulder burning in orange flames froze, melted, then fell off its body. In other words, I had cut off its arm.

[Guaaaaaaa!]

“Tsk, I could have defeated it by myself!”

“Be honest and thank me, Kang Yungoong!”

[They absorb flames and regenerate themselves. Make sure you

don't use any flames! Quick, destroy the arm that fell off!]

“Ruyue!”

Dozens of ice spears appeared in the air and rained down on the giant's arm on the ground. In an instant, the arm completely melted away, and the enraged giant roared and swung its giant sword towards me with its remaining arm. Its sword burning with lava instantly elongated, breaking past Lotte's speed and attacking me. However...

“I said your opponent is me!”

A sharp shockwave shot out from the tip of father's spear and struck the giant's body. Meanwhile, Lotte turned around to face the giant and charged towards it again. While the giant flinched from father's attack, I stabbed my spear inside its chest.

[Grrruaaaa!]

“Now, everyone, use ice magic!”

Licorice held Plene and shouted as she flew off from Lotte's back. The succubi all launched ice spheres into the air, while Licorice created an overwhelmingly bigger chunk of ice.

“Dear Husband, go first!”

“Got it!”

I’ve been waiting! I raised Ruyue’s power to the peak and a freezing energy that seemed to freeze even its creator began to emanate from the Chaotic Spear. The giant roared and held up its giant lava sword, while father and Walker also charged towards the giant.

“Haaaaap!”

With a spirited shout, I charged. The giant’s giant sword instantly swept over me, but I ignored it and continued forward. Its terrifying heat immediately engulfed me.

[Kugagagaga!]

“Son!”

“Don’t overreact, old man!”

[Kugaga...ga?]

The giant stopped its mad laughter and tilted its head. It was to be expected. After all, it should be able to feel its flames subsiding.

Felixes’ Chaotic Cape fluttered and let out a radiant light. The giant’s flames were certainly above the realm of SSS rank, making it impossible to absorb them. However, it was still possible to

nullify them!

I soon popped out of the giant sword and stabbed my spear covered in ice aura in its face. It was a Heroic Strike!

[Critical Hit!]

[Kuaaaaa!]

“Die!”

“Die!”

“When did this become Revival’s official chant!? Can we not use such a threatening chant!?”

After the giant made a thundering roar in pain, the succubi’s ice magic descended.

“The crime of trying to harm Dear Husband, pay for it with your life!”

“Attack! Freeze him!”

[Kuoooooooo!]

The earth trembled and the lava giant kneeled with its upper

body frozen. Without hesitation, I shot an aura wave containing a compressed snowstorm and exploded its head.

Having lost the control center, the lava forming the giant's body fell and scattered. The succubi then shot out ice arrows and thoroughly destroyed the lava. There was no longer any sign that the lava giant had existed. After confirming that its presence disappeared, I took back the spear I was still aiming towards it.

“Done.”

[As expected of Hero...]

“Wow! Amazing, Dear Husband!”

I sighed and murmured, while Lotte murmured in amazement. I would have liked the succubi to express themselves like Lotte, but it seemed they were deeply touched as they were all running towards me. I immediately looked for Licorice.

“Licorice, do something about them!”

“Dear Husband is so cool!”

[She's their leader!]

“Right, they share their emotions!”

Could there be anyone more able yet tiring!?

After restraining the succubi, I smacked Licorice's head and shared the information Lotte told me with father and Walker. After listening to Lotte's explanation, even father made a slightly tired expression.

“You mean there are a lot more of these guys?”

“Yes. The fact that they're here means that the king's army has moved. They will start their advance soon.”

“Advance? Invading the enemy's territory and gathering up an army. It's a rather human method.”

“Don't look down on them because they're monsters.

Lotte, who was back in her human form, retorted mockingly at Walker.

“They're a race that can use their heads like humans. If you look down on them, you'll regret it.”

“Well, I know that. I've met intelligent monsters in the dungeon too.”

I asked Lotte to return to her wyvern form. It was time to meet up with the others.

“We know their identity, so we don’t need to hesitate. We’re going to go defeat this king. All of us.”

“You say that, but I bet you’re going to take the last hit again.”

“How else would I act like a guild master?”

I rebutted Walker while he and father got on Lotte’s back. The succubi also turned into bats and flew up.

“Let’s go. We’re meeting up.”

[Shin, a scary giant monster appeared! Hiing, my shadows aren’t working well!]

“... Let’s go help the others first.”

Just when I was trying to act cool... Ye-Eun, you did this on purpose!

Chapter 224. Overlord (4)

After that, these so-called Destroyers appeared in many other places. There was one where Ye-Eun was, and other teams also reported that they discovered the Destroyers. Although Hwaya and Ina's team instantly destroyed the one they found, the other teams had difficulty defeating them and had to request for help.

Naturally, we began to move together as we met up, and by the time I killed the fourth Destroyer, everyone had gathered together.

“Are we done with the ones that came outside?”

“Hu, I can feel the heavy mana vibrating! Also, hasn't it been getting hotter, guys?”

“Hotter? Well, maybe with all the bullets you've been shooting out... Eh?”

Only after Leon's comment did I realize that the temperature rose. Because of my elementals and Felixes' Chaotic Cape, I had not noticed the change in temperature until now. Meanwhile, the others were already dripping with sweat. Other than me, the only ones unaffected were Ina, Hwaya, and Daisy.

“Ruyue, can you cool the air around us so that the guild members are comfortable?”

[Un! But I can't when we're fighting. The heat energy here is too

strong.]

“That’s fine.”

[Got it!]

Ruyue immediately released her freezing energy, and the others could finally catch their breaths.

“The heat hasn’t affected me much since I became an ability user, but this is impressive.”

[Hero, we need to hurry before it gets hotter. This is a sign that the king has started to move his forces. We have to take care of his subordinates before he get serious.]

“Alright. Let’s hurry, everyone.”

Since we couldn’t take out our plane here, everyone got on Lotte’s back. She grit her teeth and grumbled, but she accepted my request after I promised her a reward.

[Since we’re in a hurry... I’ll allow it!]

“Sorry, Lotte...”

Ilayda and Plene also left, as the two of them wouldn’t be able to

withstand a hit from the king. Plene became depressed, saying that she couldn't be of help again, while Ilayda also argued, saying that she wanted to stay. Since Plene's power helped us immensely in recovering the Philippines, it was relatively easy to console her, but convincing Ilayda was harder.

“You need my ability.”

“But Ilayda, it's too dangerous. It's possible that you might die from the aftershock of the king's attack. You have to level up a bit more. Once you become Gold ranked, you can accompany us on jobs like this.”

“I won't complain even if I die.”

“We'll be troubled if you die. We're going to need your ability in the future, so please, leave it to Ludia for today.”

“I'm more than enough.”

“In that case... I'll acquiesce. I'll get stronger so that I can be of help to everyone!”

When Ludia stepped up, Ilayda seemed convinced and went back to the mansion with Plene who had become happier after I consoled her. Michel then spoke with a bitter smile.

“She has a type of obsession with these things. I found out after I got to know her better. She won't hesitate to risk her life to save

others, a bit too philanthropic, you could say. Because of her immense love for others, it almost looks like she has no love for herself...”

“Michel can take care of her. It should be the guild master’s job to take care of his guild members, but I’m banned from talking to Ilayda about personal things.”

With that, I pointed behind me. Ludia and Hwaya were glaring at Michel.

“Shin can’t take care of each and every guild member personally, Michel Ajusshi.”

“Are you trying to make me, Mitarus’ priestess, commit murder...?”

I simply laughed without saying anything. Michel placed his hand on my shoulder with a look of pity.

“If it’s tough... you can talk to me. It’s a bit embarrassing to say this, but I’ve had my fair share of such experiences when I was younger... I know how you feel.”

“Michel...”

I felt like I was tearing up. I nodded my head ever so slightly so that the girls wouldn’t find out.

As we got closer to the volcano, the ground fissured and shot fire into the air. Lotte also became more and more anxious.

[Hero, I'm speeding up!]

“Got it.”

At that moment, Ruyue finally announced her surrender.

[It's too hard with my power alone.]

“Damn!”

Even Ruyue's strengthened ability couldn't block the temperature change!? When she returned to my weapon, the others immediately began to feel tormented.

“This is too much!”

“Ilina, can you do something?”

“I'm bad at using my power delicately... I can freeze you though!”

“Nevermind.”

“It’s too hot. Should I take off my armor?”

“It’ll be hotter if you do. Just endure it.”

I didn’t think it was possible for any environment to affect Revival’s members so harshly. I shouted out a message as I grit my teeth.

“Heat can greatly hinder your movements. When we encounter this king, I’ll handle him from the front .If the heat gets unbearable to the point you think you can’t continue, tell me.”

“Son, my body isn’t so weak that a heat of this level can hinder my movements.”

“That’s just you, Father. Others aren’t like you.”

Perhaps, only Lebuik and Ren, who were beastmen, and Michel, who trained in the ways of the sword his entire life, could be like Father. Thankfully, Hwaya, who seemed most likely to be affected by environmental effects, was a flame ability user.

[I see one!]

“Heroic Strike!”

The moment a Destroyer entered my sight, I threw my spear and intercepted him. Everyone else also poured long-ranged attacks

and killed it. However, up ahead, over ten Destroyers were marching towards us.

“Damn! Lotte, how many of them do you think are there?”

[From what we’ve seen so far, over a thousand! There are also many that are stronger than the Destroyers.]

“Wow...”

I almost lost hope. A thousand SSS+ rank monsters and more monsters above that level? There was the king to worry about too! A sigh naturally left my mouth.

[Hero, we must lower their count now. The king’s army increases in size over time. Now that we’re here, we can’t go back.]

“Right. We can’t back off now.”

[It’s good that we killed so many monsters before... The Witch made a wise decision.]

At Lotte’s words, I got a hunch.

“Is that army made of monsters? Is that why they called all monsters living in the Philippines to the volcano?”

[It's why the Lava King is terrifying. The more he fought, the stronger his army became.]

“A role model for necromancers. I must take notes.”

Daisy said an unnecessary comment as she clapped in admiration. I then smacked her head, while Hwaya grit her teeth.

“If I knew beforehand, I would have gathered an army and attacked much earlier!”

“Who knew this Lava King would be here? You did well Hwaya... There's no need to blame yourself.”

I tightened my grip on my spear. Seeing the Destroyers beginning to make their appearance on the land booming with fire, I shouted.

“Ruyue, materialize into your humanoid form! It's time to show your prowess!”

[Got it!]

Ruyue transformed into a wolf girl. Ren exclaimed in awe, forgetting the current circumstance.

“B-Beautiful.”

“Uuk!”

“Ren, Lebuik! Stop blabbering and get ready to fight! We’re descending now!”

“G-Got it, Crown Prince!”

I glared at Ren and Lebuik, and shouted.

“Every time you get hit today, I’ll lengthen your thrashing phase by one day. Lebuik will also get a taste of a thrashing phase if you’re not careful! Everyone else, get ready to fight! We’re going to destroy this army before the king comes!”

“Yes!”

“Got it!”

“I’ll protect Daddy!”

Lotte shot down like an arrow. Ruyue cooled the path we would take, as she charged forward first and swept the Destroyers. Her claws became enveloped in ice as they slashed at the Destroyers. A destroyer had been destroyed without having a chance to counterattack... Eh?

“Her weapon might be different, but her movements are a lot like Kang Shin.”

“So that’s why her movements looked familiar! It’s our clan’s movements. The meticulousness and viciousness in charging forward without looking around while not being hit even once.”

“Don’t call it vicious!”

[Elementals naturally take after their masters. We should go too, Master!]

Instead of Ruyue, I infused Peika into my spear. I couldn’t use chaos flames today, and if I couldn’t use Ruyue, Peika was the second best option. Now that it had come to this, I became a bit sad that I had already used Sky God’s Rage today. At that moment, as if she had read my mind, Peika commented.

[Leave it to me, Master. I’ll show you a lightning that can even cut through fire.]

“Thanks, Peika. I will.”

[Un!]

At that instant, I felt the connection between Peika and me getting deeper. With a smile, I made Lotte land. Once everyone including the succubi battle units landed, I got back on Lotte’s back and shot up. Hwaya shouted.

“Shin, be careful!”

“Don’t worry. Rather than that, don’t die, everyone. As long as no one dies, we’ll be fine.”

I looked at Ludia, who had over twenty Elixirs. When a large number of Event Dungeons appeared on Earth, she had taken all the Elixirs.

Knowing what I meant, Ludia sighed.

“I want to use them for Shin only... but I guess there’s no choice.”

“Huhu, Ludia, if you want Shin to love you, you’ll have to show a generous side of you to others.”

“Don’t call me Ludia, Hwaya Mastiford.”

It looked like everything would be okay. I softly smiled and turned away. The volcano in the distance that seemed to be shooting out mana for a while finally erupted grandly. The heat even made me frown. Lotte shouted like she was screaming.

[Presences of monsters in this area disappeared! A unique soldier has been born!]

“Damn, there are all these Destroyers too... Lotte, accelerate!”

[Got it!]

“Dear Husband, take this!”

When we were about to charge at a nearby Destroyer, a crystal ball flew toward us. When I quickly grabbed it, I saw a dark-pink colored spherical object. Of course, it wasn't for decoration. Such a tiny ball contained an immense amount of mana.

I tilted my head in confusion and saw Licorice smiling at me.

“It's made from a portion of all the mana collected by the battle units. It contains our love, so use it when you need it, Dear Husband.”

“But Licorice, this is the succubi's...”

“If Dear Husband dies, it won't matter no matter how strong we get. I hope that will be of help.”

“... Thank you.”

“Huhu.”

I thought she'd boast more, but she only made a small smile before flying back. Dozens of magic circles appeared around her, shooting our magic that targeted down the Destroyers. Each and

every one of them was powerful enough to make me shake. Obtaining Licorice before the Philippines subjugation was truly a godlike move.

“I can’t lose to Ruyue or Licorice!”

I put the crystal ball away as I reaffirmed my resolve. Just from a quick estimate, the crystal ball contained three times my mana. As I currently had over 120,000 mana, this small crystal ball had over 360,000 mana in it. If something like this exploded, it would be able to easily blow up a country. Without a doubt, it would help me greatly.

[Hero, I’m going to strictly charge from now!]

“You’re telling me to kill everything in one hit? Got it. I’ll show you what Wind King’s Rage is!”

My body flashed for a moment, and a massive wind and lightning energy fell into me. Sharana, who was infused into my body, and Peika, who was infused into my spear, both exclaimed.

[Master, great!]

[Huhu, Master is the best!]

“This is only the beginning! You guys control this energy!”

Lotte charged. Her destination was the new Destroyer that just popped out of the fissured ground and overflowing lava!

“Die!”

[Guoooooooo!]

I thrust my spear forward, each attack containing lethal power.

[Critical Hit!]

Wind and lightning stormed. Lotte’s charge didn’t stop. From the giant hole I just pierced through, lava spurted out like blood. The Destroyer immediately collapsed. It had died.

“All of you... fight me! Mere soldiers like you, I can take care of all of you by myself!”

[You used Provoke! All enemies in the area will hold infinite hostility for you. Just by coming out victorious against them, you will make another achievement!]

The Destroyers marched forward. Just like Lotte said, about a thousand Destroyers popped up from every corner of the ground, as they all glared at me and moved towards me. I gulped down my saliva along with a surging sense of tension and shouted.

“Let’s go!”

Wind King's Rage wouldn't stop until all of them were dead. With Absolute Soul's power, I would make that possible! Second, third, fourth...!

[Gruaaaaaaaaaa!]

Leaving behind giant holes and bursting lava, Lotte charged forward. The whirlpool of wind and lightning enveloping my body cut through the air as it left traces of destruction. It wasn't just me. Other members of Revival also charged alongside me. About two hundred succubi shot magical attacks without rest, while the roar of the fighting Destroyers shook the land.

The war between Revival and the Lava King's Army had now begun.

Chapter 225. Overlord (5)

[Sorry, Oppa. If I hadn't of made such an unreasonable request...]

“No, rather, it's good that you did. We can fight them before they're fully prepared to take us on.”

Although Yua had a large army, to the SSS+ rank Destroyers, mantises were nothing more than easily flammable bugs. They felt short in rank and were disadvantaged in attributes. Although Yua wanted to stay, saying that this expedition was planned partly because of her, when Father stepped in and gave her a stern talk, she had no choice but to go back to the guild house.

[I'm sorry that I couldn't help more...]

“It's fine. Yua will get stronger, you can help me then. For now... just pray for Oppa's victory!”

At the same time I replied to Yua, I shot my spear forward and blew up the Destroyer's head. The lava that its head was composed of jumped up at me as if to melt my head, but with Flame Sucker's power, it dissipated without having achieved any damage.

[Un...! Oppa, good luck!]

“For now, that's enough!”

I could really feel myself brimming with energy! My younger sister was an angel who always thought about me and cared for me. For her, I had to go back safely! I looked for the next target and charged. I charged, and charged again.

[Uooooooooo!]

The Destroyers' earthshaking roar rumbled in my ear. The heat from the lava also made my sight hazy. Thundering sounds rang out from all sides, as the magic of the succubi and the aura attacks of the other guild members cut through the air and faced the Destroyers.

“Eat this and die!”

I drew on Peika's power to the limit, shooting down several Destroyers and absorbing as much mana as I could. Although I had to make contact with the enemies to do so, as long as I fought in close-range, Absolute Soul could absorb about the same amount of mana as I used in my attack.

Considering the fact that I was also using Peruta Circuit, my mana didn't have a chance to go down. Of course, now that I had Ruyue materialized and fighting by herself, that wasn't the case.

[Hero!]

“Speed up!”

[Understood!]

Few of those in the guild could fight and come out victorious against a Destroyer in a one on one fight. So, as to lessen the danger they would face, I had to defeat as many as I could. With Wind King's Rage, even if I didn't kill them in one blow, I could at least neutralize them! I used Provoke to draw the enemies toward me once again as I charged through the air with Lotte.

[Crown Prince, if you push yourself too much and get hurt, it'll be the end! My father also...]

[I'm not pushing myself, don't worry!]

All this time, I had worked hard to get stronger for this moment! Compared to climbing the dungeon day and night, challenging my limits in Beyond, and fighting the Floor Masters ten times a day, this much was nothing!

“Haaaaaap!”

Lotte's wings wrapped around one of the scarlet flames flying toward us and returned it. Although it couldn't damage the Destroyers, it could at least help stop its movements. Immediately afterwards, we charged towards a Destroyer and hammered it with a spear wrapped in a whirlpool of lightning.

[Guaaaaa!]

“Lotte, how many have we killed so far?”

[178!]

Lotte and I had already bathed in the Destroyer’s flames. Although I wasn’t hurt thanks to Flame Sucker, which nullified flames, Lotte’s body was already fairly burned. However, Lotte didn’t stop and continued to charge. Her injuries soon caught my attention.

[Hero! Don’t think about useless things and attack, burns like these only take me a day to recover from!]

“... Alright. Let’s go.”

Wind King’s Rage did not end unless I stopped it. In other words, I could continuously deal wind, lightning, and charge damage. Thanks to the Giant Wolf’s Tattoo, I could also deal an additional 50% in damage.

One thing that was somewhat regretful was that 60% bonus damage to charge type skills disappeared when I upgraded my armor to the Pure Black Desire. Instead, I had gotten Desire Thorn, which could steal the life force of others. This, however, was limited to once per day. In any case, I didn’t have the time to be listing out regretful things. Right now, I had to focus on using the abilities I had to kill the Destroyers in one blow.

“Huaaaaap!”

Even if Wind King's Rage could be continued indefinitely, as it was a charge type skill, I had to keep charging for it to stay in effect. In other words, Lotte also had to charge without stopping.

I opened my eyes widely and continuously thrust out with my spear. If I let my guard down even for a second, I would be charging into a Destroyer unprepared. I had to maintain my focus. If I had no experience fighting such battles, if I had not had those battles in the Luka continent and the Panan continent, maintaining a skill like this would have been unimaginable.

[Critical Hit!]

[Guaaaaa!]

“Die!”

[Master, I can feel the presence of a powerful existence!]

Sharana, who was infused into my body, reported to me as we killed the 26th destroyer. Even as I continued to charge, I looked up and scanned the horizon. There, I saw a line of monsters marching, swinging whips made of lava.

[They're here! The Sweepers!]

“Cleaners?”

I didn't know what they were trying to clean, but it was inevitable that I would have to fight them. I had to eliminate the Destroyers before that! I grit my teeth and shouted.

“Lotte, charge! We can't end this with just Wind King's Rage!”

[Gryaaaaaa!]

Lotte roared and flapped her wings in response. The spear I shot out towards the Destroyers gathered wind and lightning and tore them to shreds.

[Master, the wind energy is getting stronger! I can still control it, but I'm not sure if Master will be fine in the center of it all!]

[It's the same for me, Master. But since Master can even wield a God's lightning, I think it will be okay!]

“Right, I'll be fine! This much is nothing!”

Indeed, with just a single misstep, the wind and lightning gathered at the tip of my spear could easily explode and cause me to let go of my spear. However, my clan's unique technique, which Heroic Strike was derived from, already required learning how to control such chaotic destructive power. Otherwise, it would have been impossible to squeeze out every ounce of power in my body to focus it in one point. The more I thought about it, the more I came to understand that my ancestors trained in rather perverted

methods. Of course, since I was benefiting from that, I wasn't complaining!

“Ice Age!”

In the distance, someone shouted. In an instant, a bone-chilling freezing energy reached where Lotte and I were located. I glanced toward the direction the freezing energy came from and saw Ina who was destroying dozens of Destroyers with lotus-like ice. Her truly incredible destructive power was fitting that of an SSS ranker.

It seemed Ina had exerted a great amount effort to use that skill as she staggered. Although I wanted to go give her a hug, I couldn't do so at the moment. I grit my teeth and continued to charge. Once I had taken care of everything, I would hug her as much as I wanted!

“Uoooooooo!”

[They're coming!]

As the succubi battle units and the other members were all doing fantastic, over half of the Destroyers had fallen. Before I noticed, the atmosphere of the battlefield had changed, and the Sweepers were charging closer.

[Their whips are dangerous! They're hotter than the Destroyers' swords and have the ability to elongate!]

“That doesn’t sound like much!”

I shouted spiritedly on purpose and drove Lotte towards them. If the Wind King’s Rage at peak power could not penetrate them, nothing could!

[A living human!]

[We love humans. They’re delicious!]

[Human flesh is so tender, it just melts in your mouth!]

When they noticed me, they sent their whips flying towards me as they blabbered incomprehensible things. I pushed the oncoming whips away with the wind energy around my spear and charged towards them.

“Taste this delicious human flesh!”

[Kuhuk!]

When I stabbed the Sweeper with my spear powered by Wind King’s Rage, its powerful rotational power drilled a huge hole through the Sweeper’s chest. The Sweepers that witnessed their kin’s death widened their eyes and swung their whips, but I continued to charge forward without paying them any mind.

Even if I were hit by the whips, with my cape's ability to nullify flames, I barely received any damage. Not to mention, unlike Daisy's whip, their whips' movements were completely readable. There was no way I would be afraid of attacks I could read!

[Kugyagyak!]

[Human... Human, Human!!]

“You guys are pretty tender yourselves!”

After fighting a few of them, I could instantly tell their special characteristics. They certainly possessed flames more powerful than the Destroyer's, but their constitution was weaker and hence had weaker defense! For me, they were much easier to deal with.

“Lotte, dodge!”

[Understood!]

Lotte's movements continued to get faster. Now that I thought about it, her abilities seemed to have doubled since the first time we met. She had also gotten bigger and more lustrous. This change could be easily seen by the fact that she was charging through SSS+ rank monsters when she was only an S+ rank monster at first.

[Hero, there are more coming!]

“I know! Keep charging!”

I gripped the spear in my hands tighter. With a bold smile, I concentrated my energy into my spear. One's martial path had to be honed through real combat. Charging forward with my life on the line, through infinite repetitions, I was coming to better understand the profoundness behind thrusting.

The moment I mastered the high-rank Spear Technique, I thought I saw the end of manaless spearmanship. However, I was only 21. There was no way I could have mastered a lofty martial path in just 13 years. Now I understood that. At the same time, I understood that the skill system wasn't perfect, and that simply relying on skill levels was the same as drawing a line to my limit.

Furthermore, normal spearmanship couldn't be the same as spearmanship while riding. The spear technique I displayed on Lotte's back was certainly not the same as when I was on my own. The more I became attuned to Lotte, the more I read her movements and modified my own, my spear attacks would display greater prowess as it matched the limits of her speed!

[Critical Hit!]

After thrusting out again, the leftover force of the attack exploded the shoulder of a Sweeper standing next to the intended target. I immediately swung my spear to the side and struck his whip away. Lotte, who seemed to have read my mind, changed her trajectory and charged towards that Sweeper. Then, with a simple attack, I was able to take its life.

As time went on, my attacks were becoming more destructive, though it still contained the same amount of power as before. It meant that my spearmanship was advancing in a realm where mana didn't matter. I couldn't help but smile knowing what was happening.

Becoming stronger was this enjoyable! No matter how much at risk my life was, no matter how many enemies I had to face!

“Good... Good!”

[Hero, were you hit by a status effect!?)

“I'm immune you mental status effects! Lotte, speed up!”

[Hero!?)

Wind King's Rage didn't stop. Until all the wind and lightning in the world gathered to the tip of my spear, my charge would not stop!

[Guoooooooo!]

Just when I was thinking that, something blocked our advance. Although we tried to charge right through, my spear couldn't penetrate it! I controlled the energy trying to run berserk, as I reluctantly took my stance for the final blow. I raised my head. I

wanted to know just what my spear couldn't penetrate.

A giant over dozens of meters tall was glaring down at me. It wore a thick armor of fire and held a spear of fire that somewhat made me desire it.

I asked Lotte.

“Is this the Lava King?”

[Sorry Hero, but no.]

After hearing that, I sighed in relief. Not using Overlord the moment I saw him was truly a heaven's fortune.

It was the start of a middle boss battle.

Chapter 226. Overlord (6)

[Lava King's Army's Knight Commander, 'Lava Heart', has appeared! Before defeating him, it is impossible to defeat the Lava King. Note that there will be no tomorrow if you do not win. I pray for your victory!]

“Thank you, message noona.”

I murmured in response to the message that rang in my ear. The giant knight I could not contain in my sight glared down at me and shouted.

[How foolish, Hero. You dare to challenge the king with such meager power?]

“Shut it, Giant.”

His words caused the earth to rumble. I thought my eardrums would rupture. He was extremely hot, and the burning flames making up his body caused the earth to melt, sinking his feet into the ground. If I wasn't wearing the Felixes' Chaotic Cape, even I wouldn't be able to overcome this heat.

[Since you awoke the king, you must be prepared to face the punishment!]

“Sorry for waking up a sleeping guy. I'll put him to sleep again as an apology. For eternity.”

[You!]

The spear he held descended towards my head like a bolt of lightning. Although it seemed to be a simple attack, a terrifying pressure of mana strangled me. Haha, even with this much power, he wasn't the king. I could only smile bitterly.

“Lotte, you can dodge it, right?”

[I will!]

Lotte replied confidently as she flapped her wings. The black flames that ignited along her wings set the mana restraining us aflame. In the next moment, she escaped from the trajectory of the spear and charged towards his thighs. Feeling the wind and lightning energy from the final gblow gathered at the tip of my spear, I shouted.

“Peika, Sharana! Let's go!”

[Leave it to me!]

[Got it!]

The two elementals shouted back in reply. They weren't just controlling the energy. They were harmonizing it with the Heroic Strike I was preparing. If the intimacy between us had not reached

the peak, it wouldn't have been possible even in my dreams.

[Is the thing you're holding a toothpick? How funny. You dare to attack me with just a frail weapon!?)

"I'm sure you'll change your mind once your thigh bursts from being poked at by this toothpick!"

The final blow of Wind King's Rage added with a Heroic Strike I was focusing all my mana to make! The wind and lightning energy danced as if to match my breathing. Peika and Sharana's power heightened. Everything was becoming one with me.

[Hero, I will erase you and raise the curtain to the end of this world!]

"Know your place, grunt! Also, die!"

As I opened my eyes widely, I focused on the one point I would thrust at. The giant's leg, covered by his armor of lava, grew closer. Although he was simply trying to kick me, a highly dense mana emitted a powerful pressure enough to crush me to death.

However, I would not lose. I couldn't.

"Eat this! Sacrifice! Desire Thorn!"

I directly used my trump card skills and thrust out. In that

instant, everything that was pressuring me disappeared. The enormous energy gathered at my spear tip had sucked in the nearby mana and freed me. Feeling that power, I gulped down a mouthful of saliva. If this attack couldn't deliver a fatal blow...! Although Desire Thorn would restore my health, I wouldn't be able to avoid the pain!

[Don't worry about the consequence and attack, Hero!]

“Haaaaap!”

With Lotte's trustworthy words, I threw away my hesitation and thrust my spear towards his oncoming thigh. In that instant, a tremendous pain swept over me. From the pain well beyond what I had imagined, I staggered. Although the damage would never be enough to outright kill me, the inflicted pain was a different story. To hold on to my spear, I used all my strength to control myself. Thankfully, the pain seemed to have ravaged the giant as well.

[Kuaaaaaak!]

The moment my spear attack reached its destination, the giant's enormous scream rumbled the earth once more. His leg burst completely, sending lava towards me. Although thorns extending out from the spear tip absorbed most of it and restored my health, a great amount of lava still shot towards me.

Even as I wretched in pain, I spread my cape out and wrapped it with mana. Even if I was fine, if Lotte was hit by that attack, she would undoubtedly melt! However, Lotte was not hit by even a

single drop of lava. Even though her body should have felt heavy as a result of my skill, she had gotten away with an incredible acceleration. Her extremely quick movements even made me falter.

“Lotte!”

[Recover, Hero! I already said you should leave all the dodging to me!]

Lotte was too cool!

I followed her advice and hurriedly gulped down a potion. My health which even Desire Thorn couldn't fully restore seemed to be slowly going back up. When I looked back, the giant's detonated leg sat on the ground melting the entire earth.

I wanted to believe that his flames weren't EX ranked, but the destructive power was one that I had never seen before. If it was Hwaya, could she surpass this power? I couldn't be sure.

[Kuaaaaa! You little insect!]

Soon, the giant, who was staggering after losing his leg, surprisingly shrunk, creating a new leg and standing tall. Although he had gotten shorter by about ten meters, he had returned to a perfect human form.

I was confident that I had dealt a critical damage, but he didn't

even seem to be on the verge of death. It seemed I would need to fight him for a long time. For the first time in a while, I recalled the Orc Lord, the one that I had fought when I was level 5.

[Pay the price for harming this indestructible knight!]

“If you were indestructible, I wouldn’t be able to harm you, you idiot!”

[Die!]

The giant screamed and swung his spear. With how big the spear was, I could only hear the sound of it cutting through the earth after I saw it flying with my eyes. Lotte dodged this attack with an almost godlike maneuver. Even I couldn’t be confident of dodging the previous attack unless I used Divine Speed.

[Hero, I’m charging again!]

“Yeah, go ahead!”

At that moment, someone was approaching me with a cold freezing energy. I thought it was Ina at first, but it turned out to be Ruyue.

[Shin, let’s go together!]

“Ruyue, you deal with the army. I’ll deal with him alone.”

[But Shin is in danger! That guy is too strong!]

“If we don’t take care of the army now, we’ll be in greater danger later. Ruyue, please.”

[... Un! Okay!]

Ruyue fell back obediently. Immediately afterwards, another spear attack flew towards me. Although his spear had stayed the same size unlike his body, as he had gotten weaker, the pressure I was facing was lesser than before. Lotte could also dodge his attacks easier. I shot bolts of lightning from my spear as I shouted in the guild communication channel.

[Everyone, focus on eliminating the lava army! I’ll handle this giant! Again, focus on eliminating the Destroyers and Sweepers!]

[We’ll leave it to you, Son!]

[If you die, I’ll kill you!]

[Good luck, Guild Master.]

Go fight instead of cheering me on! Even as I complained in a muffled voice, I smiled and held up my spear. However, on the other hand, I thought that I couldn’t win like this. I had used Wind King’s Rage and had even used Desire Thorn and Sacrifice. Even

so, the giant seemed completely fine other than that he had gotten shorter.

I was confident I would be able to crush him if I used Overlord, but I recalled what message noona said. I would have to face the Lava King after this giant. As I couldn't use Sky God's Rage, the only method I had left was...

“Alright, let's try it.”

I activated the Succubus Queen's Tattoo. Immediately, my mana rose to double its maximum amount. If this wasn't enough, I would have to absorb the crystal ball Licorice gave me, but if possible, I wanted to save it until I faced the Lava King. I wanted to end this fight with just the doubled mana!

[I acknowledge that you have many mysterious power contained in that tiny body. Still, you are weak!]

“Well, you only know how to talk with that huge body!”

Fresh lava began to flow along his spear. Lava dripped down in all directions as a thick aura shot towards me as if to pierce straight through. I cursed inwardly and dodged the attack by relying on Lotte. Then, I immediately threw the Chaotic Spear tempered with Heroic Strike.

“Die!”

[Kuaaaak!]

Having penetrated the giant's lower abdomen, the Chaotic Spear flew back into my hand with lava scattering everywhere. Once the giant filled in the hold in his abdomen, he had shrunk by another meter. I was beginning to see a way to defeat him!

“You'll soon reach my height, haha!”

[Yooooou! Lava Havoc!]

Shit, I provoked him too much! He seemed to have gotten annoyed as he struck his spear in the ground along with a fierce cry. Lotte quickly soared up.

[Tell everyone to run! Staying on the ground is dangerous!]

[Damn, everyone! Dodge! Don't stay on the ground!]

Soon after, the entire volcanic region flipped upside down. Scarlet lava erupted from everywhere. The power of this lava was so strong that even many of the SSS+ ranked Destroyers melted down.

Screams rang out from several places. No! Could there have been a casualty!? I wanted to look around, but the giant didn't give me the chance to do so.

[His main target is us! Hero, prepare yourself!]

[You puny arrogant human, you shall pay the price for your sins!]

A cone of lava erupted from right below me. I gasped and shouted.

“Lotte, quickly, transform!”

[Got it!]

Lotte immediately transformed into her human form. I then instantly held her in my arms and shot up using Sharana’s power. Although I had flew up hundreds of meters in an instant, the jet of lava was chasing after me. As if that wasn’t enough, even the giant’s spear flew towards me from the side. I used Divine Speed and flew up even more quickly. Only then did I barely escape the lava.

[You’re fast like a rat!]

The giant, Lava Heart, gritted his teeth and thrashed his spear about in the air to vent his anger. Meanwhile, I hurriedly confirmed the guild members’ safety.

[Is everyone safe!?!]

[Two members couldn’t dodge in time, but they’re alive. With

Elixirs, they'll be fine! But some of the Succubi...!]

“Kyaaaaaak!”

While Hwaya gave a report on the situation, a wind-splitting scream rang out. Not far away, an immense mana was going berserk. Without a doubt, it belonged to Licorice.

“I'll kill you!”

“Licorice!”

“Dear Husband, I must kill him!”

I couldn't stop her. I couldn't ask her to focus on killing the Destroyers in this situation. Not to mention, while the Lava Heart's attack had harmed us greatly, it had caused even greater harm to the lava army. Even if Licorice joined me, it would be fine.

“Alright, come.”

Even before the words had left my mouth, Licorice was consecutively drawing giant magic circles in the air. She glared fiercely as a strange scent flowed out from her body. I knew instinctively. That was the scent of blood.

“O resentment of fragrant flowers, Branding of Rose! Become blind from beauty and forever wander in the prison of dreams,

Sweet Nightmare!”

Licorice’s mana condensed to the point it was visible with bare eyes as it enshrouded the Lava Heart’s giant body. At that instant, his body shrunk rapidly. He was now only 20 meters tall, half of what he was only a moment ago. It was an unbelievable change!

[Kuaaaak! Succubus Queen! A mere microbe dares to seduce me!? Kuaaaak!]

Sweet Nightmare was the Floor Master skill I got from the First Dungeon’s Succubus Queen! When used against a target with lower charm than the user, it stole half of the target’s health and afflicted him with the ‘critical charm’ status effect! That giant possessed an overwhelmingly giant body and league of existence. I suspected that its charm might be higher than mine and didn’t gamble, but Licorice had used this skill without hesitation and had succeeded!

She was a Succubus Queen whose charm doubled against those of opposite sex, but to think she would come out victorious against such an opponent! Although I couldn’t fully accept it, she soon resolved my doubt herself.

[Kuhuk, a mere succubus...!]

“My clan’s ‘Blood Vengeance’ only just started! Dear Husband, attack him now! The branding will restrain him!”

“Got it! Lotte, let’s go!”

[Understood!]

Blood Vengeance. It seemed it was her clan's special ability, one that increased her power when members of her clan died! In that case, if I killed members of her clan when I first met her...! Just thinking about it made my hair stand. Message noona's warning was surely justified!

I gulped down a mouthful of saliva and charged towards the Lava Heart with Lotte who had returned to her wyvern form. Thanks to Licorice's secret skill, he was no longer as overbearing!

[Kuaaaaak! A mere human and succubus will never make me kneel! Lava Lance!]

“Dear Husband, continue charging!”

Licorice shouted in a splitting voice and threw another magic circle. I could feel that she had expended her full strength, as the enormous magic circle drawn in the air flashed and shot through the air, erasing everything in its path.

However, the moment the magic circle passed through me, I felt my strength surging. The giant spear of lava flying towards me didn't seem so scary anymore.

“Good... I'll pour all the mana I have left!”

[Hero, I will fly at full speed!]

Lotte roared and flapped her wings more fiercely. A spear made of boiling lava descended towards us. However, before we were swallowed by the lava, the magic circle Licorice shot out clashed with it. Although it couldn't erase the spear, the lava was blocked by the magic circle and became unable to advance. Although cracks were appearing on the magic circle with uneasy sounds, the time it was buying me was more than enough!

“Sacrifice! I will end this now!”

[I am the indestructible knight, Lava Heart! The one who will offer the power of the Hero to the king shall be none other than—]

Before he could finish, the bullet like Chaotic Spear I launched pierced into his chest. Peika and Sharan both shouted as they fully released their elemental power, and I also poured all my mana into the attack. At the same time, I pushed Absolute Soul's power to its limit!

“Just die, you bastard!”

[Kuaaaaaa!]

“I will achieve our Blood Vengeance!”

[Mere microbes dare... Kuaaaak!]

Licorice squeezed out her mana to its last drop, shooting an arrow into his mouth. The moment he flinched, I detonated the mana I doubled from the tip of my spear. Now was the time to finish him!

[Kuuuuuuuk!]

His scream caused the earth to fissure. Just the mana behind his scream caused great damage to everyone in the battlefield. It was truly made me shiver.

However, that was only its death throe. I could feel it. Licorice's magic had weakened it by a level, and the spear attack I poured all my mana into had taken his life. At the same time his life came to an end, I could feel his lofty league crumbling down!

[You... The king shall punish you! All of you! None will survive!]

Even after losing his life, he cursed us. It was truly a colossal curse that had even taken form. Using his flickering flame of life as sacrifice, he was casting a death curse.

“You coward! As if I'd let you!”

Don't look down on Absolute Soul's power! I jumped up from Lotte's back and charged towards the ball of mana he vomited out. Before his eyes closed from death, I could see him making a final smile. What he had just done was undoubtedly to force me to make

this move!

Immediately afterwards, at the same time the Lava Heart completely died, his curse directly slammed into me. Then, a concise message rang out.

[The power of Absolute Soul completely cancels the curse.]

“Whew...”

I had succeeded by a hair's breadth. Although I was fine, anyone else hit by the curse would have faced a dreadful fate. This self-proclaimed knight had no honor!

“Dear Husband, no! You can't face that curse alone... Eh?”

Licorice flew towards me in a hurry. After seeing that I was completely fine, a look of confusion emerged on her face. When I smiled silently, she asked curiously.

“How are you fine after being hit by that thing? That was the essence of a curse containing that guy's last-remaining compressed life force...!”

“It's the power of Absolute Soul. What, aren't you happy?”

“Of course I'm happy... Hic, I'm glad, Dear Husband.”

Licorice broke out into tears. Now that Lava Heart died, she could finally express her sorrow from the dead succubi. I smiled bitterly, embracing her and comforting her.

“Sorry Licorice. Because of me...”

“No, Dear Husband. I never thought it was possible to protect Dear Husband’s world without losing anyone... Hic.”

The other girls would surely be okay with what I was doing. I silently comforted the crying Licorice. Then, I felt a sudden sense of emptiness. Wait...

“L-Lotte!?”

The Lava Heart’s lifeless body of lava containing nothing but boundless mana was falling down on Lotte! I called her hurriedly, but she stayed still facing the lava without thinking to dodge it.

“Lotte!”

I couldn’t lose her like this! When I was about to use Shadow Blink to go save her, a refreshing fanfare rang out in my ear.

[Congratulations! After meeting extremely rare conditions, Dark Wing Lotte evolves into a higher species!]

Chapter 227. Overlord (7)

What? I couldn't help but doubt my ears. Evolve? Into what? What's a higher species of Dark Wings!? Licorice, who was in my arms, expressed her shock.

"Evolution... It's because she contracted Dear Husband. She received a portion of the dungeon's power."

"A portion of the dungeon's power?"

"There's no way something like that is natural. Because she's gained worthy achievements, she received the dungeon's blessing through Dear Husband. Though, I never would have thought a mere wyvern could have gained enough achievements to cause an evolution... Just what was she?"

"She used to be the boss of a region. Rather than that... let's go see Lotte."

With Licorice fretting about not wanting to let go, I gave up on getting her off me. When I was about to approach her, Lotte who had bathed in the falling lava suddenly shone and was encased in a red light. Even I could feel the intense heat emanating from her.

"Shin, what happened!? Did you defeat that... Hup."

Hwaya, who quickly flew towards me, saw Licorice in my embrace and narrowed her brows before closing her mouth.

Hwaya was indeed quick to understand the situation. I was truly thankful. I expressed my thanks with my eyes and spoke.

“Lotte’s evolving.”

“Evolving!?”

It didn’t take long before the shining light subsided. However, at the same time the light enveloping Lotte subsided, Lotte also seemed to be shrinking in size. Lotte, who had been gotten a lot bigger since our first meeting, was now doing the opposite.

Eventually, Lotte shrunk to about 4 meters. The light then flowed into Lotte’s body and she made her appearance. Although she was still black, there were red lines trimming the edges of her wings. She seemed to have gotten swifter, and her eyes were a deep red color. Her evolution indeed seemed to be related to lava!

[Dark Wings are a rare species of wyverns capable of controlling cursed flames. They are well acknowledged for their swift wing beats and powerful flames, but in truth, they are simply the fallen results of a powerful species of ancient dragon being cursed.]

[Dark Wings that transcend their limits are said to be able to return to their original form, but not only are there very few Dark Wings, even their fallen forms are so powerful that it is hard for them to reach their limit. Dark Wing Lotte will become the first Dark Wing to regain her original form!]

[Dark Wing Lotte evolves into Blaze Queen!]

I didn't know how the dungeon helped her, but her evolution was closer to a return. Lotte, who easily shattered everyone's imagination, approached and spoke.

[Hero, have you seen my transformation!?!]

“Yeah, I did. Your energy seems to have doubled.”

Just by getting close to Lotte, I could feel an intense heat. It seemed her energy became compressed as she got smaller. Lotte flapped her wings excitedly. Winds carrying flames blew and stirred the surroundings.

[Huhu, so this is my true form. Reclaiming my true form in exchange for betraying other monsters and choosing the life as a human's servant, truly strange! Huhahaha!]

“Do you even know what you're saying?”

[Hero, it seems you truly are my blessing!]

“Yeah, I'm happy that you're happy.”

Though it was a bit difficult as I was holding Licorice in one arm, I pat Lotte who approached me with the other hand and spoke.

“I’d be happy to hold a congratulatory party, but you should know our current situation. Wait just a little bit more.”

[I can wait however much you want, my Hero!]

Lotte replied spiritedly and pushed her back towards me. Before I got on her, I pat Licorice who was still in my embrace.

“Licorice, you used up your mana, right?”

“Un. Sorry, Dear Husband. I knew we still have to face the king, but I couldn’t control myself... It won’t recover for a while.”

“No, it couldn’t be helped. It’s fine. You can go back to the mansion and rest. We’ll deal with the Lava King.”

“Okay, I trust you.”

Licorice replied silently and gave me a kiss on the cheek (Hwaya’s brows twitched). Then, she returned to the dungeon before I got on Lotte’s back.

“Alright, now it’s time to... Mm.”

When the Lava Heart died, I thought that everything he owned would turn into lava and disappear, but surprisingly, his giant spear was still there stuck to the ground. Imbued with the Lava Heart’s remaining mana, it had been maintaining its weapon form!

“Eit.”

I lightly hurled the Chaotic Spear. The moment it hit the giant spear, it shone and was absorbed into the Chaotic Spear.

[Crimson Chaotic Spear absorbed the Lava Giant Spear. Growth: 77%]

“Huk, so much!”

Previously, the growth wasn't even at 70%. Even after eating all those Event Dungeon weapons and Floor Master weapons, it hadn't grown by even 23%, but this time it had grown by almost 10%. Although I didn't know how I was going to fill the remaining 23%, I believed it was possible to evolve it to the next level before the two year mark.

“S-Should I have checked its item description? No, it would have been eaten by the Chaotic Spear regardless...”

The Chaotic Spear spun through the air and returned to my hand. I then faced Hwaya who had been standing with her mouth open and asked.

“How are the two that got hurt? Are they okay?”

“Thanks to Ludia's quick healing and the Elixirs... they're fine,

though they lost some of their equipment... It was Walker and Sumire.”

“I can see how they got hit by the lava.”

Walker most likely got hurt trying to protect Sophie, and it was probably the same for Sumire except with other guild members. As I could imagine how painful it must have been for them, I grit. my teeth and turned to face where they were. It was best to take care of everything as quickly as possible!

The number of Destroyers and Sweepers was only half of what it was when they first appeared. Beyond them, a new wave was beginning to appear. They were most likely the last wave of soldiers, as although there weren't many, each and every one of them seemed powerful.

I aimed my spear towards them and quietly spoke to Hwaya.

“Hwaya, you protect the others.”

“I'm more worried about you.”

“I'll be fine, really.”

“Shin...”

“Hurry.”

In all honesty, having used Sacrifice for that last attack, my health was quite low. I gulped down a potion and threw the leftover bottle on the ground, breaking it. It was a signal of sort.

“I’ll be going ahead!”

“Shin, be careful!”

“Of course!”

Having evolved into a Blaze Queen, Lotte’s speed far surpassed my imaginations. Even when she was a Dark Wing, she displayed a shocking speed with that large body. Now, it almost seems like she was traveling at the speed of light.

[Hero, ready your spear!]

“I know, I’m ready!”

I replied energetically and ushered Mad Typhoon’s power up. The enemies I now faced were Lava Knights who were seemingly shrunk versions of the Lava Heart. Since I was able to defeat the Lava Heart, there was no reason for me to be afraid!

“Fight me, you goddamned bastards! Open the path towards your king!”

My roar thundered throughout the volcanic region. Seemingly having understood my words, the Lava Knights held up their weapons and charged towards me. Almost as if she was waiting for this moment, Lotte raised her voice and laughed.

[I shall allow you to feel the dignity of this Blaze Queen!]

Her body shone in a brilliant light like when I used Divine Speed. Without giving me a chance to do anything, she charged towards the Lava Knights, shattering their bodies upon contact. Although their bodies erupted into lava the moment they died, Lotte seemed unhurt.

[Hero, my body has gotten stronger against flames. Don't worry about me and fight them freely!]

“That’s nice to hear!”

It was a growth worthy of the word ‘evolution.’ I grinned and pointed my spear crackling with lightning towards the Lava Knights.

“Come at me! I’ll destroy you all!”

After some time had passed, when I looked back after hearing the death throes of a Lava Knight, only Revival’s members were remaining on the battlefield. The numerous Destroyers, Sweepers, and Lava Knights were nowhere to be seen. The battlefield, which had been filled with noisy cries and erupting lava, was now

dominated by an odd silence.

“Is it... over?”

I murmured, unable to believe it myself. The other members also looked around them as they dripped with blood and sweat.

[Indeed it is, Hero. There is only one remaining presence in this area.]

Lotte retorted in a calm manner. It was clear who the one remaining presence she was referring to was. It could only be the Lava King.

“Volcano... Large energy.”

Daisy approached me, seemingly looking extremely tired. Although she always maintained a neat appearance when wearing her uniform, her clothes now were messy and she was also full of sweat. It felt like this was the first time I saw Daisy sweat.

“My undead, many gone. Lava King, give me.”

“... Do you think you can control him?”

“Probably? Giving up control of all other undead, possible.”

“That’s not good!”

“For times like today, ultimate weapon needed.”

At her words, I hesitated. She was right. Although her undead monsters were strong, it was sometimes better to have one with absolute strength. That said, Daisy was truly amazing. Even though we had not won yet, she was already thinking about obtaining an undead.

“Alright, fine.”

“Huhu.”

After listening to my answer, Daisy smiled. I then gathered the other members together. Their poor states couldn’t be described with words. It seemed Walker and Sumire, who had lost their equipment, had even more difficulty as they fought with low tier equipment.

Furthermore, the succubi battle units also had additional casualties. I was glad that this damned lava army was taken care of, but I could only sigh at the succubi’s death.

“Really... Thanks, everyone.”

“You did well too.”

“We won somehow. I thought we were going to die.”

“I’m exhausted.”

While everyone threw in their comments, Ina jumped into my embrace silently. She was probably the one who did the most work today. She must have killed far more soldiers than me, and must have used far more mana as well. Feeling like I had made Ina suffer needlessly, I hugged her and pat her back.

“Thank you, Ina. You did well.”

“Uuung, I’m not done. I’ll fight with Daddy.”

“My lack of ability is making my Ina suffer... Sorry, I still need Ina’s power. Can you help me?”

“Un. I’ll protect Daddy.”

Feeling even sorrier, I held Ina tighter. Leon then asked.

“Friend, is that guy not coming out?”

“Yeah. He apparently doesn’t fight unless he’s in an environment where he has the most advantage.”

“What an annoying guy.”

“Okay, now... let’s pick the members.”

At my words, a few reacted immediately. The first to jump was none other than Sumire.

“I can still go on, Shin-nim!”

“No, Sumire.”

“But I haven’t even used my god’s power yet! I only got hurt before because I wanted to save it for the boss fight...”

“Sumire.”

I shook my head once again.

“I’m only looking at one condition for the members I’m selecting now. Will they die in one hit or not. Even though you have your god’s power left, you’re too exhausted. It’ll be difficult to fight again.”

“Shin-nim...”

“Son, I can go on.”

“You can’t either, Father.”

“Hey!”

I didn't back down even with Father's protest and continued.

“All the succubi did amazingly today. Go back to the Resting Place of the Angels and rest. We can hold funerals for the fallen comrades when the battle is over.”

“Dear Husband...”

“Now, I'll announce the ones coming with me to fight the Lava King. It'll be me, Daisy, Hwaya, Ina, and Ye-Eun.”

“What? What about me, Shin!?”

“Not you, Ludia. It's too dangerous.”

“Shin!”

“No.”

“But you'll let Su Ye-Eun go!?”

“If anything, Ye-Eun's evasive ability is the best among us. Look at her.”

I pointed at Ye-Eun. Not only did she have very few injuries, they were all light and her clothes were much cleaner than the others. I wasn't bringing Ye-Eun for no reason. Her evasive ability was number one in the guild. As for her strength...

“Ye-Eun has ‘that’ thing.”

“Uu.... Yeah, I'll use it... Uuu.”

Ye-Eun seemed to have realized what I was referring to, as she frowned a bit and murmured.

“But Master is aiming for Shin...”

“She won't do anything funny in the middle of battle.”

“Don't worry, Ye-Eun. If she tries to do anything, this Unni will stop her. Even if I have to burn her.”

“It's my body, Unni!”

Then, Ren spoke in a dissatisfied tone.

“Crown Prince, I also have Deific Manifestation.”

“If Ren uses Deific Manifestation, you'll jump straight into the mouth of the volcano. You need to wait until the thrashing phase

ends.”

“Whew.”

Hearing that I wouldn't be taking Ren, Lebuik sighed openly. I spoke with a bitter smile.

“Anyone else will just get in our way. Just stay back and rest, okay?”

“Uuu...”

“I don't want to...”

“Ludia, I'll leave you to heal the others at the mansion. Please.”

“But Shin... Uuuu.”

Ludia puffed up her cheeks, then turned away in the end.

“Do whatever you want. Go die if you want, stupid Orc!”

“Thanks for listening to me.”

“Eit!”

Even after telling me to go die, she threw a few bottles of Elixirs towards my face. I easily caught them, after which Ludia turned away again with a humph before returning to the dungeon.

“Then we’ll be off, Father. Don’t secretly follow us.”

“Kuhum! You’re looking down on your father too much!”

“When Father gets a god’s true name, Father can come with us.”

“Kuuuuk! Fine, I swear I’ll get that damn thing!”

After having everyone return to the mansion, I looked at the remaining members and declared.

“Let’s go hunt the king!”

Our destination was the mouth of the Bulusan Volcano. There, the Lava King was waiting for us!

Chapter 228. Overlord (8)

The temperature rose as we got closer to the volcano, and the earth melted from the unnaturally high temperature. As Ina, Hwaya, and I were fine as we had methods to deal with heat, Ye-Eun seemed to be holding on barely with just her monstrous willpower, and Daisy didn't seem to be doing any better.

“Hot... Clothes off...”

“Don't, Daisy. You'll hurt my eyes.”

“Kang Shin, rude man. My body, pretty decent.”

No, I meant that Hwaya would poke my eyes... But Hwaya would really poke my eyes out if I said that, so I stayed silent. Hwaya spoke out in my place.

“Daisy, the reason I like you is that we don't growl at each other about Shin. Don't try to make an enemy out of me.”

“...? Not sure, what you mean.”

“Good.”

Suddenly, the surrounding heat became more intense, and an ominous smoke was spewing out of the volcano.

[Hero, it's him. The king is inside the volcanic crater.]

“Got it. Guys, it's time. It's good that you're easing your tension, but that's enough joking around.”

“Shin, I'm not joking. This is more important than this so-called Lava King.”

“Well I'm sorry, but us surviving is much more important to me.”

“Y-Yeah... I got it.”

Hwaya's face reddened and she turned away. I might have been a bit harsh, but I didn't regret it.

We were getting closer to the crater. The atmospheric mana vibrated, the earth tremored, and an overwhelming pressure descended on us. I stuck out my tongue and licked my lips. Even though I knew my life was at risk, my heart trembled in excitement as it always does before fighting a powerful opponent. Exhilaration dominated over fear. Even I thought I was a bit perverted.

“Huu...”

I took a slow breath and calmed myself. Although I asked Ye-Eun to call Duca to fight, I planned on fighting the Lava King without the help of Peruta.

If I used Deific Manifestation and couldn't defeat the Lava King, I would be leaving myself open to attack. More importantly, Peruta couldn't use my class-specific skills and skills within the Collector's Pocket Watch. Unless Peruta came in his real body, he was far weaker than me when I used Overlord. That was how much I'd grown.

Though, that also meant that I was much weaker without class-specific skills and the pocket watch's skills.

“Daddy, I can't use Deific Manifestation.”

“Hm? Did it fail?”

“Un. So I can't use it.”

“That's okay, Ina's strong even without it.”

“Un!”

The others also took out their weapons and raised their spirits as they checked their health and mana. The moment we arrived at the mouth of the volcano, Lotte suddenly shouted.

[It's erupting!]

Lotte immediately turned her body and flew away. At the same

time, a colossal heatwave swept over us. I poured mana into my eyes to withstand the light and heat, and when I checked the surroundings, a giant tree of lava was sprouting up. Dear god...!

“This isn’t ordinary lava. It’s an overwhelming lump of mana...!”

[Kuhahaha! Why have you come all this way? You have killed all of my subordinates. You are the first to have ever done so! Kuhahaha!]

A hearty laugh of a man rang out. Shockingly, the lava that erupted as if to cover the skies didn’t fall and were gathering in one point. Then, easily absorbing all of its mana, he appeared.

Elegant red scales covered his giant body, and two crooked horns rose above his head. He had yellow reptilian eyes, a long and thick tail, and a pair of bat-like wings that stretched out towards the sky.

Simply put, he was a dragon, a giant dragon that easily reached 150 meters in length.

[The ‘Lava King’ Grand Raid commences! You met one of the enemies aiming for the world’s power! The dungeon’s power is not fully effective against a world’s enemy. The Grand Raid system exists to give what little support it can to explorers who are fighting against the world’s enemies. The Lord’s blessing converges on your party. As a result, the enemy can only ignore up to 30% of your party members’ skills and levels!]

[Absolute Soul nullifies a part of the enemy's power. Your skills and levels will be 90% effective against the enemy!]

[Remember that you will not be able to bring out your items' and skills' full power. We wish you luck! You will receive a huge reward if you defeat the Lava King!]

[Why have you come to disturb my sleep? Until 'he' arrives, I planned to simply sleep, but you lot have ruined it. Now there are no more monsters to serve as materials for my army, so now I'll have to relocate too.]

“Don't worry, I'll make it so that you don't have to.”

Even as I felt his overwhelming existence, I smiled with effort and retorted. Inside my head, I was busy flicking the abacus beads and calculating his league. He seemed to be level 90 at the very least, and he could even ignore everyone's skills and levels. Isn't that too much!? I was thankful that I had learned Absolute Soul.

However, his scale armor and the endless pit of mana in his body could only make me sigh. He seemed to have reached the limit in both physical and magical defense. It was likely... that he possessed the so-called EX ranked power, or one that was only a step below it.

[Mm, as expected of a Hero. You can carry such a large strength in that tiny human body. Tsk, really, killing you would be such a waste. If only you weren't a Hero, I would have taken you in as my subordinate.]

“Sorry, but I have no plans to bathe in lava.”

[Kuhaha! I like your character too! Truly a waste!]

His giant eyes were solely focused on me as if the others weren't worthy of even talking to him. At that moment...

“Kana, might melt... I'll use Deific Manifestation.”

“Deific Manifestation!”

Daisy and Ye-Eun both used Deific Manifestation. Ye-Eun's master, Duca, was the first to descend. The moment she opened her eyes, she saw the giant dragon and screamed.

“Whoa, what's this!? It's so strong! Is this the world's enemy?”

“No, he's the one right under him.”

“Oh, Dear! We meet again. We must be fated!”

Hwaya silently ignited a fireball above her palm. Someone else then smacked Duca's head. Surprisingly, it was Daisy!

“You! Duca! To think I have to see you even after death, I'm appalled.”

“Oh, Hecate!? What are you doing here?”

“My disciple called me. Focus on that giant turd, would you!?”

Daisy’s master and Duca knew each other!? I wasn’t the only one shocked. The Lava King also seemed shocked.

[You two are... gods! I can smell the stench of gods!]

“I’m surprised you noticed us.”

Daisy’s master, Hecate, snorted as she talked back to the Lava King. Then, she approached me and whispered.

“Child, you have Zeus’ power. Can you use it?”

“N-No, not yet... Do you know Zeus?”

“Oh, how unfortunate. Also, how could I not know Zeus? I’m Hecate after all.”

I had no clue what she meant . I told myself to look into it later.

“You must have heard from Daisy, but we have to defeat him! Please help us!”

“Of course. Duca, follow me.”

“I want to play with Dear a bit more... Chet.”

With Hecate’s power, undead monsters began to appear in the air. Although they were monsters Daisy normally controlled, they seemed to be blessed with a special power. Duca also seemed to have received Hecate’s power as she floated in the air while grumbling.

[Kuku, this is getting exciting! I didn’t think you’d be hiding this much power! Kuhaha! Kuhahha... Die!]

This sly bastard! The Lava King suddenly sent a fireball towards us in the middle of laughing. Because of its incredible speed, I was about to use Divine Speed, but Lotte quickly turned around with a sneer and dodged it. Meanwhile, Hwaya and Ina both flew up into the air.

However, what Hwaya did as she flew up shocked me. The flames she shot out from her hands was gently enveloping the flames shot out by the Lava King. She could receive his flames head on! Hwaya spoke as she made a provocative smile.

“Your flames sure are tasty.”

[Hm? A human? A human that can wield flames so freely... Who are you? Truly an interesting bunch! Kuhaha!]

He shot out more flames. This time, the flames didn’t just come

from him. The volcano also erupted and spewed out a lava that was filled with mana. It then broke into dozens and rained down on us.

“Shin, I can’t block them all!”

“Don’t worry about the ones coming my way!”

[Kuaaaaaaaa!]

The moment the words left my mouth, Lotte breathed out golden flames from mouth. Her flames clashed with eight streams of flames flying towards us before swallowing them and disappearing.

What the others did weren’t so different. Ina’s ice froze the lava, and Duca easily evaded the attacks coming her way. As for Hecate, she swung the whip in her hand, and a blue barrier appeared around her and the elite squadron of undead monster, protecting them.

[Good, good! It would be boring if it was so easy! Kuhaha!]

The Lava King only laughed even though his attacks were blocked. It could only mean that he hadn’t used his full strength. Immediately afterwards, the surrounding temperature shot up once more to the point that average ability users would be burned to death just by being in this space.

[But to pick a fight with me with just this much strength, truly

foolish!]

Giant fireballs appeared in the air. Their pure and oppressive essence of fire blazed as they danced. Ina frowned and held her arms out, creating numerous crystals of ice. However, even Ina couldn't completely cancel out the fireballs.

“It's too hot. I hate sweating.”

[Kuhaha! A little kid with such an overwhelming magic power! It seems I might have come knocking on death's door! Kuhahahaha, life should always be blazing! In front of this king, set your lives ablaze!]

[Foolish brute, you're destined to burn yourself to death!]

Although the voice was undoubtedly Daisy's, Hecate's voice gave it a mystical silvery feeling. Hecate swung her whip, and the undead monsters charged towards the flame dragon. They all dodged the oncoming fireballs as they each attacked the flame dragon.

[Kuhaha! Dead beings injuring this Lava King, truly interesting!]

The Lava King exploded with an enormous amount of mana. Even with protective barriers surrounding them, half of the undead monsters were instantly annihilated. Hecate made an annoyed growl and swung her whip, strengthened the undead monsters again. However, the Lava King seemed to have only just

begun. He flapped his wings once and the undead monsters were all pushed back. Then, he immediately charged towards us.

[I'll annihilate everything! You will pay the price for looking down on me! Kuhaha!]

“As if!”

Duca shouted and instantly disappeared from my sight. Immediately afterwards, the Lava King stopped charging. Shockingly, a streak of blood shot out from his neck. Duca had successfully injured him!

“Ku, this guy is too big! It feels like I only poured a bucket of water in a sandy beach!”

[Kuhuhu, it's been awhile since I've felt pain!]

His howl shook the earth and raised the surrounding temperature once more. I was dumbfounded. With just his existence and his overwhelming mana, he was trying to steam us to death!

[This is what is known as 'absolute'! Absolute Fire!]

The volcano erupted once again. Shockingly, he jumped into the lava, and when he reemerged, the wound on his neck was gone.

[Tiny human, how will you extinguish an inextinguishable flame? As long as fire exists in this world, I will never die! That is why I, Lava King, reign as a king!]

“You’re too noisy, you damned lizard!”

Hwaya shouted and reached out with her hands. A part of the lava being absorbed by the Lava King changed direction and flowed into Hwaya. She threw her Cyclops Lord’s Golden Eye into the air and shouted.

“Eit, everyone get ready to attack! Golden Pupils, curse him!”

Eh? Cyclops Lord’s Golden Eye had another effect? While I stood shocked, the Golden Eye fiercely rotated, seemingly compressing its power. Then, in an instant, it shot out a beam of light toward the flame dragon. The result could only be described as shocking. When the Lava King was hit by the golden laser, the Golden Eye that shattered!

[Kuaaaa! That one hurt quite a lot! Impressive, impressive!]

“I lost an Epic grade item, so it better have! What are you all doing!? Attack him!”

I didn’t know how big of an attack that was, but since it could deal that much pain to the Lava King who could ignore a portion of items’ effects, it was understandable that the Golden Eye shattered. I turned my eyes away from Hwaya who seemed to be

on the verge of tears and tightened the grip on my spear.

“Lotte, sorry, we’ll have to fight separately.”

[I can’t injure him alone. Hero should do what Hero needs to do.]

Lotte’s fierce wingbeat smashed away the heatwave. I gave her a grin and jumped off her back. The Lava King then shouted.

[Oh? You’re fighting me yourself? Outstanding! Truly a blaze!]

“Sorry, but I’m no blaze!”

[Then what are you!? Kuhaha!]

“I’m an Overlord!!!!”

In that instant, I became a giant covered in black armor.

[You used Overlord! While the skill is active, your HP and MP triples, and all stats double! When attacking the enemy, you have 10% chance to afflict a random highest rank status effect. When attacked by an enemy, you have 20% chance to afflict a random highest rank status effect.]

Through my body, the power of an absolute destroyer had descended on Earth!

Author's note:

It will come up again, but gods from Earth's mythology can share the same origin as other worlds' gods. In other words, different named gods can refer to the same god! Because Daisy's master appeared on Earth, she assumed the name of Hecate. If she appeared in a different world... Huhu.

Chapter 229. Overlord (9)

After using Overlord, I examined my body, surprised by the effect. My 5 meter tall stature, the black armor of mana covering my body, and the overwhelming power touching my skin made me tremble.

Even the Lava King could not laugh seeing my appearance.

[That power...!?!]

“I obtained it just to beat up bastards like you!”

In truth, I didn't care about anything the Lava King was currently saying. Following the sense of omnipotence flowing through my body, I lengthened my spear to several tens of meters and shouted.

“I'll defeat you within the next 3 minutes!”

[Try it if you can!]

The Lava King opened his mouth and vomited out flames once again. However, I charged into his mouth directly. Before I could even try to block his fire breath, Lotte blocked it on her own.

[You won't harm Hero!]

[Eit, a mere wyvern acting so bothersome just by learning to wield flames!]

I flew past Lotte and straight towards the Lava King. The Chaotic Spear, which had elongated to dozens of meters, was flashing with a threatening black lightning.

“Eat this!”

[Kuhahaha, I like your courage, Hero!]

A giant barrier of fire appeared in the air, and the spear I thrust out clashed with the barrier, crackling with a terrifying amount of lightning. I twisted my waist, adding more strength to my spear and pushing it forward. In an instant, the barrier of fire became dyed in black before it shattered easily.

[Critical Hit!]

My spear then stabbed his neck. His blood spurted out towards me, but I quickly pulled my spear out, swinging my spear lightly to make the blood dissipate.

[Kuaaaaak!]

“Huhu, what a beautiful sight!”

Hecate’s voice rang out. She then soared into the sky and swung

her whips here and there. All of the undead monsters then howled before beginning to attack the Lava King who was writhing in pain. Ina also took advantage of this chance, creating giant masses of ice in the air and firing them at the Lava King.

“It’s hot! I hate you!”

“Kyahahahaha! You’re too cool, Dear!”

“Duca, control yourself!”

Once exposed, the Lava King’s body was only a good shooting target. I twisted my body in the air once more, stabbing the Lava King again and again. In the next moment, Duca’s figure seemed to flash in the corner of my eyes and another stream of blood spurted out from the Lava King’s neck. I didn’t know why that woman liked attacking her enemy’s neck so much.

[Kukuk... Kuhaha! Humans, you are indeed interesting! But if you think this is enough... to make me troubled, you couldn’t be more mistaken!]

“Kyak!”

Duca screamed and quickly jumped off his body. Centered around his body, a powerful heatwave pulsed out, sweeping over all of us. I quickly reached out with my hands and unfolded ‘Enigma.’ Enigma’s domain then perfectly halted the heatwave’s advance. Even I was surprised at my own power’s strength.

[So it's as I thought. Hero, you really are interesting!]

“Sorry, but I don't find you that interesting! Hwaya, the volcano's going to erupt!”

“Got it!”

The reason he was talking was to give himself time to recover. I spread Enigma out like a net and suppressed the Lava King's attacks completely. Then, I aimed my giant spear filled with an ample amount of Heroic Aura towards him. The Lava King flapped his wings fiercely and shouted.

[Hero who has reached the limit of a human being, see if you can overcome this king!]

“That's exactly what I plan on doing!”

I shot my spear forward. The Lava King faced it directly, breathing out flames. However, Lotte blocked his flames coming towards me. Her body was already wrapped in a blinding brilliance.

On the other hand, the volcanic crater under us was rumbling unnaturally. I could see Hwaya jumping in haphazardly!

“Child, you'll die!”

“If this is all it takes to kill me, I’d rather die! Shin, I’ll stop him from recovering! You kill him!”

“I’m trusting you, Hwaya!”

In truth, I was worried sick about Hwaya’s safety, but I tried my best to not think about it. Even a bit of extraneous thoughts made one’s spear shaky and halved its power. Right now, it was more important to focus on dealing a devastating blow to the Lava King!

The giant spear version of Heroic Strike clashed with the Lava King’s scarlet flames, which even Lotte couldn’t block, and scattered its energy to the side. I once again fiercely circulated Peruta Circuit. The atmospheric mana became absorbed into my body, becoming part of the whirlpool enveloping my spear.

[Kuhahahaha! I was hesitating because it would be a waste to burn you into ashes, but I won’t hesitate any longer!]

“Try it!”

The moment my spear neared the Lava King’s face, his eyes flashed, and hundreds of fireballs ignited in the air, swooping towards me. If I hadn’t used Overlord, I would have had no choice but to dodge them, but my current self didn’t see the need to dodge them. I continued onward with a penetrating force and charged into the flames. Lotte exerted flames from her entire body and charged in with me.

“Lotte, I’ll leave it to you!”

[I can’t block them all, Hero!]

“I can handle the rest of them!”

Controlling the mana of Enigma covering my body was none other than Peruta Circuit’s rotation! Peruta Circuit’s rotation sucked in a portion of the amorphous mana making up my armor and became a pitch-black whirlpool. The Lava King’s ravaging flames were also sucked into the whirlpool. Of course, it wasn’t that they couldn’t damage me at all. However, this much pain was more than bearable!

“Sacrifice!”

[Kuhuk!]

[Critical Hit!]

Along with his scream, a large amount of the blood he vomited rained down. Although I was also injured from Sacrifice’s side effect, while I was using Overlord, the pain was reduced. Seeing the king writhing in pain, I grinned.

“Does it hurt? It hurts for me, too.”

[Now you've made me mad! Kuaaaaa! Eternal Flame!]

Along with the pulsing of his mana, the volcanic crater rumbled once again. Soon, it would erupt again! Even as he tossed blood in all directions, he cried maniacally.

[I am eternal! As long as even a single wick of flame exists, I will never die!]

“Like I said... I won't let that happen!”

I threw my spear towards him. Carrying a black whirlpool, the Chaotic Spear cut through the air and pierced the Lava King's wing. Then, I pulled it back by controlling the Enigma. I felt like the Lava King's monstrous weight would pull my arm out. I really had to exert all of my energy to pull him towards me. At that moment, Ina stepped in to help me.

“Don't bully Daddy! I hate you even more!”

[Ku... Kuhahahahaha! You, your ice is truly surprising...!]

Ina's attack at full force froze his body in an instant. Without missing this opportunity, I yanked him towards me. Hecate also made the best out of this opportunity, holding her hand in the air and shouting.

“Little One, the blood you shed will strangle your neck!”

Hecate's magic flashed. The blood flowing out of his neck and burning in the air squirmed together from Hecate's magic, becoming a red chain that dug into his body! Strength then left the Lava King's body, and it became easier to pull him.

Lotte also tackled him to make him lose his control over his center of mass. Although Lotte's figure was much smaller than the Lava King, her tackle was powerful enough to make him groan in pain. Every time Lotte struck his body, he was pulled closer to me more quickly.

Even so, there wasn't enough time. Before I could completely pull him away from the range of the volcanic crater, the volcano erupted with a scalding lava!

[Kuhahaha... ha?]

His endless mad laughter suddenly came to halt. The eruption had suddenly stopped as if the throat of the volcano had been plugged. It was undoubtedly Hwaya's doing! Using this chance, I quickly yanked on the Lava King.

[Kuaaaaaa!]

“Duca!”

“I'll help you!”

Duca's body instantly separated into dozens of copies. With each of them possessing a frightening amount of magical power, they all charged towards the Lava King and stabbed him with their daggers exuding a black aura. Duca then shouted.

“Feel the weight of my blade! Dance of the Fool!”

[Kuhahak! You bitch!]

Just the fact that the Lava King had stopped laughing showed the situation the Lava King was in. Moreover, he had realized he couldn't recover like before. He must have laughed, thinking that he could regenerate himself no matter how much damage he took, but now, each and every attack was bringing him closer to death.

When Duca backed off after succeeding in her attack, I reached out and retrieved my spear first before charging at the Lava King, who was still writhing in pain from Duca's unknown skill and power. It would have been nice if I could use Wind King's Rage at this moment, but as I had used it not long ago and had even fully charged it, it was regretfully unavailable for use.

“Haaaaaaap! Die!”

Even so, my charge was monstrously powerful. The Chaotic Spear dug straight into the middle of his chest and detonated the mana of Enigma, messing up the Lava King's insides completely.

[Kuhahahak!]

I controlled Enigma with Peruta Circuit to the best of my ability to do as much damage as I could. There really was nothing better than Peruta Circuit for controlling a large power that even I was incapable of understanding.

[Critical Hit!]

Even after leaving my spear and thus my control, Enigma continued to spin endlessly as it ravaged the Lava King's body. It almost felt like it could kill the Lava King directly!

[A mere human dares to injure my body!!!]

The flames on his body exploded. Although his mana was decreasing, it was still overwhelming, as his giant mana became a torrent of flames of an indescribable temperature and swept toward us like a tidal wave. This was undoubtedly the highest ranked flames he could ignite! I knew instinctively that this was the EX rank! Flames one must burn his soul to ignite!

“Everyone dodge!”

“You don't have to!”

At the same time I shouted towards everyone to dodge, Hwaya also shouted. She was soaring up from the crater. Her eyes were shining with a strange red light, and there were no signs on her body that she had stopped the volcano's eruption. Instead, several

tens of enormous masses of magma circled around her, as if to act as her guard.

“Hwaya, you...?”

“Do you get it now?”

Hwaya smiled bashfully. Then, she made a peace sign with her fingers.

“I can go to Beyond now!”

“That’s what’s important!?”

Leaving my shouting behind, Hwaya shouted.

“Let’s see if your flames can win against Agni!”

The Lava King’s flames fiercely clashed with the masses of magma Hwaya shot out. Surprisingly, they were neck and neck. A god’s true name could even resist EX ranked flames! In any case, I had to make use of this opportunity. I gripped my spear and charged towards the Lava King. The mana of Enigma gathered on the spear tip and caused a powerful rotation. It was almost as if I was using an electric drill.

[Kuk, do you think a human can overcome this king just by obtaining a god’s power!?)

“That’s why there’s the saying, there’s no shame in a pack of hyena attacking a lion!”

I replied for Hwaya as I charged towards him with my spear. His flames were occupied with Hwaya’s flames and could not affect me in the slightest. The Lava King seemed to have resorted to physical brawls, as he flew towards me with his giant body!

[Why don’t we fight!?!]

“You sure can move quick for someone so heavy!”

With every flap of his wings, the distance between us shortened. His tail shook ominously as it gathered flames at the end of it. As a precaution, I called Lotte.

“Lotte!”

[My all for Hero!]

Although her battle cry was a bit worrying, I ignored it temporarily. She flew in front of me and hid herself within the light. The name ‘Blaze Queen’ suited her perfectly as she was a brilliant luminosity, not just flames!

[Take this!]

[Stop annoying me, Wyvern!]

Lotte charged forward, and the Lava king swung his tail. Surprisingly, in the middle of flying, Lotte disappeared. The moment the Lava King's tail struck empty air, Lotte penetrated his abdomen and appeared behind him!

A huge amount of blood became dispersed in the air. To think she could penetrate through his body directly!

[Kak!]

[Hero, now!]

“Right, now's the time!”

Along with Lotte's shout, I affirmed my resolve and shot my spear into him as I activated a skill. The enormous mana swirling around my body directly...

“Eh?”

In the next moment, I was thrown vulnerably in front of my giant enemy's eyes. No, that wasn't it.

My body had shrunk.

[I was waiting for this very moment!]

The Lava King opened his mouth. What could be seen within was an endless void and an undulating fire of hell. I grinned.

Then, he swallowed me.

Chapter 230. Overlord (10)

It was extremely hot. That was all I could think of. The Lava King's EX ranked flames were burning my mana. I had heard that there was nothing it couldn't burn, but this was still too much.

Before it was too late, I howled.

“Kuaaaaang!”

[You used Frozen Roar! All enemies in the battlefield freezes in place. All allies temporarily become super-armored and has all abilities increased by 50%. Your chance of landing a critical hit doubles when fighting enemies affected by Frozen Roar.]

[Frozen Roar's effect is suppressed! The enemy's power halves your skill's power. You could not freeze your target completely!]

That didn't matter. What was important was that I could now breathe. Really, I had received more damage from this guy's heat than his direct attacks! What an absurd monster!

Even as I gritted my teeth, I took in a deep breath and pointed my spear towards the roof of his mouth. With how big he was, even if I stabbed him with the strongest attack I could make, he would only feel it as a thorn pricking him. Even if I could expand my aura to dozens of meters, it would dissipate in the process of breaking through his defense.

As such, I deactivated it. What, you ask?

It was, of course, Sky God's Play.

[Kuaaaaaaaaa!]

His scream was music to my ears. I opened his mouth forcefully and standing on his tongue, I pierced his head with my spear which had returned to its dozens meter long length.

“That was a feint, you retard!”

[Kuaaaaa!]

“What kind of an idiot believes what his enemy says?”

[You tricked me, Hero!]

Although I was certain that I pierced his brain, he surprisingly seemed fine. It seemed that a world's enemy was a world's enemy no matter how weak he was. His biological functions undoubtedly worked differently than other organisms. In that case, what did I need to do to kill him? Perhaps I would only find out by continuously beating him up.

“Everyone, attack!”

“Duca!”

“I’m already on it, Hecate!”

As I ordered my party members, I poured lightning elemental power into my spear in order to deal a fatal blow before the remaining two minute time passed.

“Let’s see exactly how many attacks you can withstand! Lightning Spear Storm!”

[Master, this power is too overwhelming! I feel like I’m being swallowed!]

“Hold on just a bit more, Peika! Uooooooooo!”

The Lava King’s mouth seemed to want to devour me, but I held my spear up desperately and drilled a hole on the roof of his mouth. His blood fell like a waterfall, drenching me and igniting. I formed a barrier of Enigma around myself using Peruta Circuit, but that wasn’t enough to completely block his attack.

“Kuaaaaaaaaaa! Die!”

[Pay the price for tricking this Lava King! Kuhaaaaaaa!]

A scorching heat rose up from his belly. Was he trying to breathe out flames in this situation!? However, as the saying went, once

one rode a tiger, it was hard to get off. Quitting now would be the worst thing I could do. I decided to trust in Overlord's defensive power and activated Divine Speed, stabbing him desperately.

At that moment, dozens of bone spikes covered in black mana shot out from my body and attacked the roof of his mouth with me. Thorn Throne's option had activated!

[Kuuk, this is a dragon's...!? Hmph, I'll melt them all!]

A terrifying heat erased all traces of Frozen Roar and swept towards me. I shouted in a scream.

“Ruyueeeeeee!”

[I'll try!]

Ruyue, who was waiting all this time for this moment, exploded with her power! A thick barrier of ice was erected between the Lava King's throat and me. Sharana then joined Ruyue and strengthened her ice. Despite the two elementals' effort, the Lava King's flames destroyed the ice barrier. Thankfully, his flames were slightly weakened as a result as they swept over me. Shockingly, I still couldn't nullify these flames. As expected of the EX rank!

[Critical Hit!]

“Kuaaaaaak!”

Even as the flames clashed with Enigma surrounding my body, it dealt great flame damage to me, and I struggled to prevent myself from screaming. Pure Black Desire increased my chances of dealing critical hits, but also receiving critical hits. Although it was great when I was the attacking, it was excruciatingly painful when I was the one being attacked!

[Die! I'll devour you and use you as my fuel!]

“I want to say the same thing!”

It seemed the others were attacking the Lava King from the outside as it was extremely noisy and his body was rocking harshly. However, the Lava King was entirely focused on me and I was similarly entirely focused on him.

“Huaaaaaaap!”

I stabbed my spear into him frantically. Stabbing, pulling, stabbing, pulling. All the muscles in body acted to repeat just these two moves. I ignored the screams of my muscles and continuously used Divine Speed.

Since my mana would fill up from Absolute Soul when I attacked him, I didn't hesitate to use Divine Speed as much as I wanted. As a result, I had dealt a countless number of attacks in a short moment, and the Lava King became afflicted with several status effects.

[Overlord's special effect afflicts your enemy with forced sleep! Your enemy's powerful resistance transforms forced sleep into 'heavy chaos'!]

[Overlord's special effect afflicts your enemy with massive hemorrhage! Your enemy's powerful resistance transforms massive hemorrhage into 'hemorrhage'!]

[Overlord's special effect afflicts your enemy with frenzy! Your enemy's powerful resistance transforms frenzy into 'rage'!]

[You, that is the mana I can't control! The mana on the opposite side of divine power!]

“You noticed too late, lizard! Haaaap!”

[Diehard activates.]

Although Enigma was protecting my body, it seemed my health had fallen to a dangerous level. Because I was too focused on attacking him, I hadn't even realized it. If I didn't have Diehard, I would have already died.

[Just whose protection are you under!? How can you wield those abilities!? He told me that you explorers couldn't block my path!]

“I want to hear more, but since you probably won't tell, I'll give

up.”

Lightning Spear Storm also didn't end unless I stopped it. The roof of his mouth was already ragged, and although his blood and flesh was dripping down on and igniting into powerful flames, I continued to attack him. Then, even Deathblood activated.

[Deathblood activates, using 5% of your HP to inject contaminated blood into the enemy! The Lava King falls under the 'blood contamination' status effect! Its attack power and movement speed decreases, and it loses mana continuously! This effect cannot be dispelled unless the target dies! The enemy tries to resist the status effect, but fails!]

[Kuaaaaak!]

“Oh, this one worked!”

[Kuooooo! You used a curse! One that cannot be cleansed unless either one of us dies!]

I took out an Elixir Ludia gave me from my inventory. As the terrifying heat immediately began to melt the Elixir's bottle, I hurriedly popped the cap and gulped it down. Then, I transferred all the power of Enigma in my body to the spear.

Raging flames immediately surged in and damaged me, but the Elixir's power mitigated it slightly and prevented my health from going down. However, this would not last long.

Most importantly, Overlord's remaining time was only several tens of seconds. When it ended, I would undoubtedly die. When the thought crossed my mind, my spear shook slightly, but I quickly wiped the thought from my head. If I lost my composure now, it would really be over.

Next up was the crystal ball Licorice gave me. Without hesitation, I broke it. A boundless magic power flowed out and into the Chaotic Spear. As it continued to crackle with lightning, the Chaotic Spear released a bright red light which could be seen even in the midst of the Lava King's flames.

At that moment, Devourer activated automatically. My health had gone below 10% even with the Elixir's power. However, when I realized that I was at death's door, I became even calmer.

It was simple. If I could kill the enemy, I would live. If I couldn't, I would die. As such, there was only one thing I needed to do.

“This is my strongest attack! Sacrifice!”

If my health was below 10%, it would be impossible to activate Sacrifice. However, even if I didn't attack, the dragon bone spikes that shot out from my body endlessly stabbed the Lava King, and with Devourer's power, my health was maintaining a level above 10%.

Knowing my health wouldn't fall below 10%, I used Sacrifice without a shred of hesitation, scraping all my mana into my spear.

[Kuhahaha! I'll admit it, you are the first to have troubled me to this extent! But did you think you, a human, could defeat this Lava King!? Today will be the end of Earth! Despair, and die! Even in death, you will suffer! Kuhahaha!]

His belly heated up once again. Infinite mana, infinite flames. No matter how much mana I stole from him with Absolute Soul, no matter how much mana he lost from blood contamination, his mana was infinite. Unless his soul was annihilated, he would be immortal!

[An existence none can harm, that is me!]

“Heroic... Strike!”

Even if I knew that, I thrust my spear. I had never been so focused in an attack. With only the thought of killing him in my mind and my entire body's strength in my spear, I stabbed my spear into him! A massive explosion broke out.

[Critical Hit!]

[Kuhuk!]

Without even a hint of exaggeration, his head exploded. The moment my spear pierced his giant dragon head, it had exploded from being unable to withstand the converged mana.

Of course, along with his head exploding, I was released into the air. Although it was still scorching hot, it was much more bearable compared to when I was in his body. Now, I could even see how the others were doing.

“Daddy!”

Ina immediately flew towards me with a wave of freezing energy. The flames that were still burning on my body fought Ina’s freezing energy, but were soon extinguished. It was then that I realized that Overlord had ended. Although I had a few seconds left, I had even spent the power to maintain it in the previous attack.

Devourer also seemed to have stopped, as I couldn’t feel my health going up. I suspected that my health was at 10%, where Sacrifice would have put me in. I really felt like I was dying. If I closed my eyes, I felt like I would never open them again.

Then...

[If this is your limit... It is my victory!]

I froze. Although I had confirmed that his head had exploded, the giant flame flying towards me was undoubtedly real. Ina shot her freezing energy towards it in shock, but her mana seemed to have reached its limit too. I had also used every ounce of my strength.

In that case, Return would be the only...!

[You will not escape!]

[Gaze activates! Your movement speed falls drastically. You cannot open your inventory. Your health and mana recovery speed decreases. When being gazed at by your enemy, you will not be able to use Return!]

“How is he alive when his head exploded!?”

“Duca, stab your dagger in him before it’s too late! Moonlight Restraint!”

Hecate seemed to have done something as the headless Lava King twitched. Immediately afterwards, Duca flew up to him and stabbed her dagger into the Lava King’s flaming body. A blue light spread out from the dagger, and the Lava King’s movements stopped in the air. However, his flames were still just as vigorous as before. He shouted triumphantly.

[Kuhahahaha, you think this is enough to stop me? The moment the Hero dies, your loss is guaranteed!]

The Gaze skill made me unable to do anything. If I had mana left, I could have used Divine Speed, but I had just used all of my mana. To think he still had such a cheaty skill! He’s just as crafty as me!

[So this is the end. Foolish! I had expected more from you all!]

“Found it! Agni’s offering, the Cosmic Fire of Agni!”

At that moment, I could hear Hwaya’s shout. Her eyes opened widely and between her clasped hands was a white flame exuding holiness. Immediately afterwards, the white flame in her hand flew up and seemingly burned something invisible.

Although it didn’t look like much had happened, the effect was truly extreme. The Lava King suddenly made a heaven-piercing scream.

[Bitch!]

“Don’t be rude, you damned lizard!”

Hwaya shouted sharply and held her clasped hands up high. Her red hair fluttered in the air like silk, while her ruby-like eyes burned fiercely. When using her god’s power, she looked like a goddess of holy fire.

“Die!”

[Kuaaaaa!]

As a horrific scream rang throughout the entire volcanic region, the giant flame expanded and flew towards me. However, before it could near me, Lotte who had escaped Gaze’s effect snatched me. The flame that missed its target then continued to expand until it exploded.

Immediately afterwards, the most enjoyable fanfare I had ever heard rang out in my ears.

[Grand Raid success!]

Chapter 231. Guardian (1)

[Amazing! With just five people, you have defeated one of the enemies threatening the world! The Lava King's soul has been completely annihilated by Agni's flames. As a result, all flame type monsters invading Earth will have all abilities decreased by 10%! This is a monumental achievement!]

[You obtained the title, 'Guardian'. The dungeon is extremely satisfied by this result, and has decided to increase the support for Earth's Guardians. When fighting on Earth, your abilities increase by 10%!, and you will receive even better rewards for completing Event Raids and Grand Raids!]

[You obtained 30 stat points and 10 skill points as rewards for completing a Grand Raid.]

[Rewards will be distributed in order of contribution.]

[Kang Shin-nim's contribution is the highest. Choose your reward.]

[1. Lava King's Egg (Legend)]

2. Flame Dragon Evil Eyes (Legend)

3. Immortal Fire Dragon Whip (Legend)

4. Fire Dragon Arl (Legend)

5. Guard Ring (Legend).]

The moment I heard the fanfare, my body went limp. I didn't want to move even a single finger, and in truth, I barely had the strength to do so. Then, as Lotte put me down on the ground, Hwaya flew towards me.

“Shin!”

“Yeah, yeah, I'm okafdsah!?”

[Uwak, Witch! What are you doing!?!]

Attacking me when I don't have any strength to resist! Even if I wanted to say something, I couldn't because her lips were completely blocking mine. I only resisted meekly as I made barely audible moaning sounds. Because of the pain and damage from Sacrifice and the fatigue that swept over after knowing that the battle ended, I couldn't move even though Hwaya wasn't restraining me strongly.

Hwaya only let go of me once 30 seconds had passed. After barely mustering enough strength to take a step back, I pointed at my lips and shouted. Because of the huge shock, my legs were shaking.

“%!#\$*\$ (What were you doing)!?”

“I was too happy... Sorry, but I’m happy with that.”

“M-My tongue was twisted.”

I staggered back with my face entirely reddened. I then bumped into someone. I turned around and saw Duca.

“Dear, how about you do it again with me?”

“Kyaaaaak!”

I leaped backwards. Duca, who was smacking her lips and approaching me, was then punished by Hecate’s whip. Both Daisy and her master were too reliable.

“Don’t scheme on another girl’s man!”

“Can’t I have some fun? Ow!”

“Mm, as I thought, I can be great friends with Daisy. Even the... god called by her Deific Manifestation is so helpful!”

Hwaya who had acquired a spot next to me nodded her head as she watched in satisfaction. I hoped she’d realize that she was just as scary as Duca.

Then, without me having to say anything, Lotte quickly flew next to me and protected me. Lotte was the only one who understood me! Of course, I wanted to believe that she just wanted to protect her master and had no ulterior motives.

“By the way, how did you kill him? No, how was he even alive?”

“It seems like it was a special magic, one that separated his body and soul. If I wasn’t using Agni’s power, I would have been done in too.”

“Ah, so he took out his soul before his body was heavily damaged.”

“Yep, and once he restored his body with lava, he could return his soul. Before he could do that, I incinerated his soul with Agni’s power.”

That damned guy, doing all that when he was on the verge of death... He was even worse than me! Wait, was I spitting on my own face?

“Thanks Hwaya, you saved us.”

“I got my reward so it’s fine... If you think it’s not enough, can I get it again? The remaining 4.8 points. This time, from you.”

“No... Sorry.”

It went by 2.1 points! Uuu, straightforward women were too scary. If I let my guard down even for a second, I felt like I would just fall. The all-knowing expression of Hwaya's was even more worrisome.

Seeing me flustered, her grin shone even brighter.

"Shin, do you..."

"Let's make an undead now."

It seemed like Hwaya was about to say something important, but Daisy, or rather Hecate, interrupted her. Hwaya glared at Hecate.

"Weren't you going to cooperate!?"

"I don't know what you're talking about, child. That child isn't your man, and I can't let my poor Daisy be alone forever. You're still young, so you should give up and find another wonderful man."

"You!"

After ruining the mood, Hecate danced towards the volcanic crater as she whistled. It was then that Ina ran into my arms.

"Daddy!"

“My Ina, was it scary?”

“Un.”

Ina’s eyes were teary. It seemed she thought I would die. When I looked away from Hwaya to console Ina, Hwaya drooped her shoulders and spoke weakly. She had undoubtedly gave up saying what she was about to say.

“Argh, I’ll endure it...”

“Mommy, thanks for saving Daddy.”

“If I don’t save my man, who would? You should stop crying too.”

“Un. Next time, I’ll get stronger and protect Daddy and Mommy.”

“Daddy will get stronger to protect Ina too.”

“Un!”

Hugging Ina, it felt like my heart that was racing because of Hwaya and Duca was returning to its normal pace. I could finally relax. I patted Ina’s head and pondered.

Although romantic feelings made my heart pound, they also made me distracted and unfocused. On the other hand, when I was with Yua or Ina, I felt relaxed and was empowered by feelings of wanting to protect them. As I thought, for me right now, family was more important than romance.

... Though something felt off, I decided not to pay attention to it.

“Wow, even with his soul gone, he still has such a powerful regenerative ability.”

Hecate gave an unreserved praise. When I approached the Lava King's corpse that had fallen into the lava, his severed head had been mostly regenerated. Even without a soul, his body had a terrifying strength. Even though so much mana had been shaved off and stolen, the mana remaining in his body was absurdly great. It was even absorbing the mana inside the lava pit.

“If we don't handle it soon, it will revive as an undead we can't possibly control. Huhu, it's great that Daisy called me.”

“Is it impossible with Daisy's power?”

“No, child. It's just that there isn't enough time.”

“That's the same thing. Hecate, hurry up. Then, we can go play somewhere! It's been such a long time!”

“What, you want to enjoy women since you can’t get a guy? Behave yourself. Return your body to its owner and go back!”

“Chet.”

Duca smacked her lips and gave up on tempting Hecate. I felt like I had caught a glimpse of the depth of the gods’ world, but I tried to ignore it and watched Hecate turn the Lava King into an undead.

“Uung, this guy is really overwhelming. With him out, none of the other undeads can be used.”

A brilliant light shone from Hecate’s hands. Once all undead monsters went back into her inventory, she started the process of turning the Lava King into an undead.

All of her mana was sucked into the Lava King and lifted the Lava King’s body sleeping in the volcanic crater. His body slowly became blackish red, a sign that it was evolving into an undead.

In case something happened, I prepared myself to call Peruta. However, once I became confident that she would finish her work without any mishap, I looked at the other target that was itching for attention. It was, of course, the reward list.

“Hwaya finished him off, but I’m the 1st, huh.”

“Without you, we couldn’t have won.”

“We wouldn’t have won if any one of us was missing. especially you, Hwaya...”

“Yeah, but you were the won who damaged it the most and drove it to the verge of death. All I did was finish him off. Now, hurry up and choose your reward.”

“Ehew.”

In truth, there was only one thing for me to choose. The Lava King’s Egg! As I wanted to give it to Yua, I was a bit worried that it would become tied to me, but thankfully, that wasn’t the case. After putting the egg into my inventory, I made a sigh of relief.

“With this, my original goal is completed too.”

“Shouldn’t you tame it yourself? I know you care about Yua, but...”

After seeing that I had chosen an egg, Hwaya raised an understandable question. I shook my head.

“I can’t tame a fourth monster yet. If I put skill points into it, I might regret it later. More importantly, I don’t have any Taming-related skills, so rather than raising a monster from an egg, it’s more appropriate for me to tame an already strong adult monster. On the other hand, Yua’s main class is Tamer, so she can tame many more monsters and have skills that help her tamed monsters

get stronger. If Yua raises a powerful monster from its infancy, it'll grow by leaps and bounds."

"If that's what you say... Oh, this must be an orb!"

As expected, Hwaya was the second to choose a reward. What she choice was the Lava King's Eyes, which even I was tempted to get. She leaped in joy, saying that she had found something to replace the orb she had lost. In the next instant, she screamed.

"Kyaaaak!"

"Hwaya! Are you okay!?"

Hwaya suddenly knelt and covered her face. I hurriedly squatted down and asked to be sure.

"Was it not an orb, but Evil Eyes!?"

"Kuuk, yeah... My eyes... What if it looks like a reptile's now!?"

"Raise your head. It'll be fine."

"No, it's going to look weird. What should I do..."

"Don't worry."

“Will you take responsibility?”

“Yeah, yeah, hurry up! If it’s now, we might be able to turn in back!”

“You promised.”

I took Hwaya’s hands off her face and her face was revealed. Her eyes were shining in a deeper red than before. Almost like the Evil Eyes I possessed, countless particles of light were gathering in her eyes and forming a strange symbol.

Beautiful enchanting pupils. They were like Loretta’s with only a different color.

While I blanked out, Hwaya quickly stole my lips again and spoke with a grin.

“No takesies-backsies.”

“You... I’m taking it back!”

“Really, I made it easy for you too. Still, you can’t take it back.”

“You knew it, didn’t you!? That nothing would happen!”

“Well... Your Evil Eyes came from the Basilisk.”

“Ah...!”

‘You fool! The Basilisk is a reptile too!’ I shook my head, realizing my own stupidity.

“We both have Evil Eyes now. Isn’t it fateful? Not that I believe in fate or anything.”

“I don’t like that word either... but anyways, congratulations.”

“Hmph, in that case, Child belongs to my Daisy. She already had Evil Eyes.”

Hecate walked towards us. Behind her, the reborn Lava King was flying slowly. Although he didn’t give off as much pressure as when he was alive, the pressure was still massive. Without Overlord, I wasn’t confident in beating it one on one.

“Call it Laki.”

“... You didn’t just shorten Lava King, right?”

“...”

“Daisy’s naming sense...”

Hecate dodged my gaze. I gave up on interrogating her further and looked at Laki who was flapping her wings in the air. His awe-inspiring majesty reminded me of the time we fought.

Perhaps because I nearly died several times, the whole fight felt like something that happened years ago. Although not even 10 minutes had passed, I was now looking eye to eye with Laki, who had become our ally.

I grinned and looked away.

The clear full moon poured a chilling blue light over us. With all the burns we were suffering, it couldn't feel more satisfying. Feeling like the moon was blessing us, I spread my arms out. It's so refreshing...!

“By the way, Dear, do you know your armor's full of holes? Are you seducing me? I'll fall for it gladly!”

“Ah, shit...!”

So that's why it felt chilly!

Chapter 232. Guardian (2)

After the fight was over and confirming that there wasn't even a single monster remaining in the Philippines, we returned home on the plane we put in Hwaya's inventory. Although everyone was exhausted, we were full of smiles knowing that we had achieved more than what we came to do. That said, a few were still unhappy.

"My own son is ignoring his father..."

Hearing Father's mumbling as he leaned against his seat, I flinched. However, to my surprise, Walker who had his body buried deep into his seat stood up for me.

"If you don't want to be ignored, get yourself a god's true name, Kang Yungoong."

"If that's easy, why don't you do it, Walker?"

Walker retorted to Father's rebuttal with a grin.

"I'm good. People should know where they belong."

"Edward says that, but he was vexed too. He doesn't like getting left out of things, you see."

"Now that you mention it, he did come to our raids when we

didn't call him."

"Don't spread false rumors, Sophie."

On the other hand, Yua's expression continued to be heavy. It was because of the Lava King's Egg I gave her.

"I don't have the right to take this, Oppa. Everyone got hurt because of me, and many succubi even died..."

"Who knew the Philippines would have such a monster? It's not Yua's fault."

"There was nothing I could do. I thought I could be of help to Oppa now..."

"That's all the more reason you should take it. Yua is the most suitable one for raising whatever monster that comes out of the egg."

"Oppa..."

Seeing Yua's dejected look, I patted her head. Who would like hurting others because of something they said or did? Although Yua couldn't be blamed for what happened, she couldn't help but feel pained. However, nothing would change by staying dejected. If I put it a bit stronger, it was foolish.

“Because of Yua, we discovered the Lava King sooner and defeated him. The sacrifice we had to make in the process is regrettable, but it’ll be fine as long as Yua doesn’t forget about it. You can get stronger for the remaining succubi.”

“... Yes, Oppa. I will.”

“Good.”

Yua’s expression became slightly brighter. Good, once she had a clear goal, she would undoubtedly march forward without losing sight of herself.

At that moment, Ye-Eun who was standing up from her seat behind us spoke up.

“How come you get strangely smarter and kinder whenever you talk to Yua?”

“Are you implying I’m mean and stupid when I’m talking to you and the others?”

“Owwww!”

Even while I punished Ye-Eun appropriately, the plane was soaring to its destination. For the record, Leon was piloting the plane for the way back instead of Walker. Why were all the men in our guild so able!?

After we returned to Korea, we were showered with countless camera flashes. Of course, I simply ignored them. The most important thing right now was to get some rest. We had reclaimed an entire country. It wasn't something that people would forget because we stayed quiet for a day or two. Furthermore, there were more important things we had to tend to.

We decided to hold the funeral for the six dead succubi at the resort area. The main reason was that it was the most environmentally beautiful place we knew. As the dead succubi didn't leave behind any corpses, we buried an empty coffin along with gifts we had for the parted.

“Dear Husband should already know this, but funerals aren't part of succubi's tradition.”

“Makes sense.”

“Un, because our existences are like morning dew, disappearing the moment we die... That's why this feels so unfamiliar.”

Licorice continued.

“I'm happy. That even though we won't leave anything behind, everyone here will remember us.”

“Licorice...”

Although I had not known her for a long time, because she had always shown her playful side, the current her felt extremely unfamiliar. However, Licorice was the Succubus Queen, naturally having lived for a much longer time than me. She had undoubtedly experienced much more and had grown much more. Perhaps because these thoughts were written on my face, Licorice made a small smile and spoke.

“Not long after I was born in Enesis, I became the Succubus Queen. It was really only luck that I was born with this bloodline.”

“Really?”

“Un. But immediately after that, my world lost its power. At a young age, I had to lead my clan to cross over to Elesia. For the sole purpose of obtaining a world’s power, I claimed countless lives without knowing good or evil.”

“ ... ”

Licorice stared at the tombstone we placed and continued.

“At the time, there was only one thing on my mind – my clan. We had to survive. We had to survive. That was the only thing I could think of. That’s why when even a single member dies, I lose my reason and go wild... You saw it, right?”

“I did.”

“When the war ended and I realized that we’d lost... I negotiated with the Lord and found shelter in a place isolated from the dungeon. In truth, I just wanted to rest a little.”

“I see...”

“Of course, I knew I couldn’t stay like that forever. If I did, the entire clan would simply wither away. I knew a day would come when we would have to fight again.”

“...”

“Whether I was on the side of the humans or the monsters, whether I was on the defending side or the attacking side, none of that mattered. What mattered was that my clan survived, just that. Ah, no. I would be lying if I said I wasn’t looking forward to meeting the man who would become my husband. You see, the one regret I had was never having even touched a man’s hands after being born as a succubus. Huhu, I was scared on one hand, but my heart also fluttered on the other... That’s how I waited for Dear Husband.”

For that part, Licorice spoke as she looked at me coquettishly. Unable to find the words to respond, I scratched my face awkwardly.

The attacking side and the defending side, monsters and humans. Which side was at fault? That, I didn’t know. I had always struggled to protect the place I belonged, and the only thing that had changed was that there were more people I had to protect. Of

course, Licorice and her clan included. That's why the fact that those I had to protect died made me...

“So you don't need blame yourself, Dear Husband. We had long since prepared ourselves for this fight and this sacrifice. We never even dreamed of surviving until the end without any casualty.”

Did she also have the Evil Eyes Daisy had? I stared at Licorice with doubtful eyes, but she only gave me an enchanting smile in return. In the end, I sighed and retorted.

“... Will you continue to fight with us?”

“If Dear Husband dies, I'll die too. Plus, I have to avenge the dead clan members! Don't ask such obvious questions, Stupid Husband.”

“The one who calls people stupid is the stupid one! ... In any case, thank you.”

“Huhu, I'm happy to have met Dear Husband. I'm glad that my husband is you.”

Her expression was too happy for me to nitpick about when I had become her husband. I told myself to address that problem later and shut my mouth. However... I also had a feeling that I might have to change my stubbornness in this regard.

Once the funeral ended, I visited Fairy Garden for the first time

in a while. Of course, I only had one goal. That was to give Pure Black Desire to Lin for repair. However, when I visited Lin's workshop, a shocking scene entered my eyes.

“Lin... Lin is working on his own accord!?”

“I'm! A! Blacksmith! You! Damned! Bastard!”

Lin retorted to the beat of his hammer with a stronger force behind each strike. Curious as to what he was making, I asked.

“What are you working on?”

“Hasn't! Anyone! Taught! You! Not! To! Talk! To! Someone! Who's! In! The! Middle! Of! Working!?”

“But Lin's different than those novice blacksmiths. Plus, why should anyone wait four to five hours to see a blacksmith? It's not like they have anything to learn.”

“So you know.”

Lin's shouting suddenly stopped. I thought he would put on an aloof act next, but that didn't seem to be the case. He put down his hammer and dipped a red-hot piece of metal in water to cool it down.

“So, what is it?”

“A ring.”

“For me!?”

“Kang Shin, have you been hit by a hammer before? Are you trying to have a taste?”

Even though I had gotten much stronger than the first time I had met Lin, I still had no confidence to win against him. He seemed weaker than Loretta, but he was still a Transcendent who had far surpassed my level. As such, I declined his offer politely and asked again.

“So who is it for?”

“Loka.”

“Lokanyan!?”

When I looked at him with a shocked face, Lin responded awkwardly.

“Yeah, we got one. It’s a bit late, but I thought I should make her a ring.”

For a moment, I tried to process what he just said. Then, I spoke with a blank expression.

“Congratulations, Lin.”

“You understood with just that? Damn it.”

“To think that Lin would become a father... Pfft.”

“I see, you don’t think a hammer is enough and want to try the anvil?”

“Forgive me.”

Lin looked at the completed ring. Then, he began the detailed refining process as he breathed out fire from his mouth. In this entire world, the only person... no, draconian who would make a ring like this would be Lin. I asked Lin again.

“So Lin, um... how?”

“I always planned on taking responsibility for Loka... It’s just that we haven’t gotten a baby until now.”

“That’s the most surprising thing I heard out of your mouth...”

“Not that I won’t do it with other women.”

“That’s the worst thing I heard out of your mouth...”

Light flashed. Lin was imbuing the ring with magic as he was refining it. It let me realize once again how skilled he was as a blacksmith and as a magician.

Even as he was performing such a difficult task, he yapped endlessly in response.

“Men with both ability and charm are few in number, and all women want such men. If they want me, I’ll give myself to the women I like. I’ll be able to enjoy myself, and the women will be happy too. It’s killing two birds with one stone. You shouldn’t think too hard either. I heard from Noonim that it’s quite crazy. No one’s doubting that you’re a Hero, you don’t have to bring so many women around...”

“I’ll never be able to do that.”

“Then just do what you want. But know this. What will happen to the women who are only looking at you is up to you. It’ll be nice if they’ll leave for other men, but there are surprisingly many women who can’t do that. Not everyone can be like Loretta Noonim.”

“I heard she has a... first love.”

“Are you hoping girls you throw away will remember you for hundreds and thousands of years? Then you’re the worst.”

“...”

“Like I said, your Loretta’s Noonim’s new love found with great difficulty. You managed to make Noonim fall for you when she had given up on love, but if you make her sad again... I’ll kill you.”

The killing intent that shot out for a moment made me flinch. I realized once again how much I had grown. If it was in the past, I wouldn’t have noticed anything, even if I fell under a status effect. Lin seemed to have noticed that too as the corner of his mouth twisted up to a smile.

“I’m just saying it. Well, if you have the ability, it’s best to just accept everyone. It’s not like Noonim will give up at this point just because there are one or two more women.”

“Lin’s values and mine are too different.”

“Of course, we lived in a different world after all. In the world I came from, strength was all that mattered. Those with power would be forgiven no matter what they did, and those without power chose a master to protect their bodies and minds. The lucky ones were the ones who could make the choice for themselves. Most didn’t have such luck... There were many men who took up women, and also many women who took up men. I was especially strong, so many wanted to come under me. Amongst them, women paid with their bodies.”

This was the first time Lin had said anything about his world. I became a bit curious, and asked.

“So did you accept them all?”

“Are you crazy? I have eyes too. Plus, what am I going to do if I accept every girl that comes to me? If I was lax about that kind of stuff, I would have never see the end of it. If you don’t have feelings for them, you have to cut them off.”

“Uk.”

“It was kind of like your current guild. I only accepted those with abilities. Of course, they weren’t just women, but men too. There were also many that I simply protected, and I didn’t always make them my women or servant. I had my fair share of troubles you see. Also, it’s not like I could take them with me wherever I went.”

“Was Lokanyan also...?”

“You could say that she was my first ally.”

“I knew it.”

“Are you done asking now?”

“I’m still curious about a lot of things.”

“Then bring a good bottle of wine later. The rest won’t be free.”

“Got it.”

Lin cooled down his ring and scrutinized it to check that everything was perfect. Then, as if satisfied, he sighed and put away the ring somewhere. Then, he took out of a cigarette from a place different than the place he had stored his ring. Finally, he tilted his head and asked.

“By the way, what are you here for?”

“Repair my Pure Black Desire, Lin.”

“Uaaaaaaak! More work!? Come on, just how did you poke holes in a Legend grade armor!?”

“You see, I fought a weak world’s enemy...”

“What weak world’s enemy? There is no such thing! Uuuu, I should have chased you out the moment I saw you!”

I suddenly felt much better. When I met Lin, I really had to see his troubled face!

Chapter 233. Guardian (3)

The succubi filmed the entire Philippines recapturing process without leaving anything out. The number of videos we had was too many to count, and we didn't attach any difficult conditions for the media to obtain them. We only stopped them from separately editing them. Rather than making the video easy to see for the viewers, we wanted to directly relay the situation from the battlefield to the viewers. Of course, it was also to prevent any malicious editing.

To be honest, releasing the videos was a bit embarrassing, but my feeling of wanting others to understand the situation Earth was under was greater. No ability users could easily handle the monsters shown on the videos, and if Hwaya and the succubi didn't protect the cameras with their magic, they wouldn't have been able to properly film anything anyways.

Humanity had to understand this and fight against the monsters more seriously. The current trend of seeing monsters as a source of income had to be changed.

“As we expected, the reaction is huge.”

“Negatively?”

“Also positively.”

Hwaya grinned and scrolled through the screen in the air. I could clearly feel the passionate reactions from ordinary civilians and

ability users of all countries. Even now, messages were pouring in endlessly.

“There’s just too much evidence for everything to be a lie. Look, we’re getting so many inquiries asking for how to apply to Revival. I already announced that the condition is being an SS rank, though.”

“How cold...”

“Philippines no longer has monsters. At least, not at the moment. The land of the monsters became a land full of resources, and the surviving Philippine citizens are hailing us as gods.”

“I mean...”

We didn’t ask the Philippines for money, and we clearly told other nations eyeing the now empty Philippines that they had no rights over them.

What was important here was that we didn’t benefit financially. The moment we requested something, we would become no different than those who saw monsters as money. What we had to gain from the Philippines was much more important than something like money.

Of the Philippine population, ninety percent had died from the monsters’ invasion. In other words, only ten percent had survived. Although that may not sound like a lot, that was over ten million

people, and that would be enough to run a country. For the Philippine citizens who were left without homes and land, the current Philippines would serve as the perfect foundation for recovery.

There was an innumerable amount of new mines and natural resources, and they would be able to test new crops and minerals that crossed over from another world. It was truly a land filled with treasures.

Of course, giving some of the new resources away to other powerful nations would be inevitable. Building everything up from scratch would simply be too hard. However, if Revival stepped in to ensure the trades were fair, Philippines would undoubtedly be able to rise again as one nation.

“Like you said, there are criticisms too, especially from Koreans. As you know, Koreans don’t think too highly of the Philippines. They’re asking why you’re helping a country that has always committed crimes against them.”

“Just laugh it off. Although we won’t be able to butt in on personal vendettas, the ones that committed the crimes are probably dead, and the current Philippines won’t be able to do anything against Koreans. Of course, if they do commit such an absurd act again...”

Although I didn’t think that would ever happen, if they made use of the fact that we were protecting them, they would have to pay the appropriate price.

Well, if they realized even a portion of the power we had, they wouldn't dare do such a thing. In fact, they would undoubtedly do whatever they could to be gain our favor. Although we won't request anything from them, if they wanted to gift us, we wouldn't decline either. That was the best way to maintain our relations.

They'd lost families, friends, homes, jobs, and everything they knew and loved when they escaped from the Philippines. The fear of monsters was undoubtedly buried deep in their bones. To protect themselves from monsters, they knew who they had to make their ally.

However, it seemed that Korean citizens didn't want to even think about why we took the effort to film everything.

“There are so many. ‘My blood is boiling’, ‘why does something a Korean person achieved have to be given to the Philippines’, ‘aren't they just idiots’, ‘Philippines should have been made to pay tributes to Korea’, etc, etc...”

“They make it sound like they're the ones who shed blood in the Philippines.”

“Tell me about it. It's not like you fought for financial benefits... You fought to find a new pet for your younger sister.”

“Kuhum!”

Hwaya's sudden attack caught me off guard. I let out a dry cough and turned my gaze.

“You sure love your sister. I wonder how these people would react if they knew the real reason we went to the Philippines. What do you think, Guild Master?”

Hwaya spoke as she put her arm around me and stared at me fixedly. I eventually gave in.

“Forgive me, Vice-Guild Master.”

“Since it wasn't for a monetary reason, fine. I'll forgive you.”

“Why are you bullying me? You're so mean...”

“You see, I think you're the cutest when you're making that flustered face.”

“How selfish!”

In this trip to the Philippines, we gained everything we could ask for. Although Yua still felt guilty about making the guild members suffer and having the succubi die, thanks to her, we were able to attack the Lava King before he could fully prepare his army and ultimately defeat him.

If we had fought him later, although we would have also been

stronger, he might have overwhelmed us with a much stronger army. No one blamed Yua and even considered her casual request as a fortune.

Daisy obtained an insurmountably powerful undead as a result, and Yua had obtained the Lava King's Egg, which had the potential to become stronger than the undead Daisy obtained. Hwaya obtained Evil Eyes, Daisy and Ye-Eun obtained powerful Legend grade weapons, and Ina obtained a ring that would fortify her weak defense.

Although I didn't have any material gains, I obtained the Guardian title, which had a powerful effect and gave an ample amount of stats and skill points. Furthermore, Revival position as Earth's guardian was solidified. Having no one to needlessly interfere with our business was truly priceless.

“Dear Husband, we have more data.”

“Urk.”

At that moment, the door opened and Licorice walked in. She carried a crystal ball in her hand, and I no longer needed Loretta to tell me how much information could be stored in that little crystal ball.

“There are three potential places where the kings could be staying. Let's look at them together, Dear Husband.”

“Uh, you see, I have to finish grinding the 70th Floor Master...”

Of course, defeating the world’s enemies was important, but it would be troublesome if it interfered with my progress in the dungeon. How am I supposed to face them if I didn’t get stronger!?

However, the two girls didn’t seem intent on listening to me.

“Let’s work, Dear Husband! We have to crush those stupid kings’ heads!”

“You only need an hour to do it anyways. For now, work. Is your Guardian title for show?”

“Damn it...”

I have other things to do in the dungeon too! I have to get my repaired Pure Black Desire from Lin! However, my inner screams only rang silently.

[You consumed the Fruit of Charming to the limit, making you glossier than before. You will receive love from all regardless of their sex. Your magic and charm increase by 13. Consuming more of this item will likely have no effect.]

[You equipped the Incubus King Set. Your charm and magic increase by 30. When the Incubus King Set is equipped, you can use ‘Bewilderment Bomb’ once per day. When your target’s charm is lower than yours, you will steal half of their magic power and

afflict your target with the ‘sweet fatigue’ status effect. When the target’s charm is higher than yours, you will lose half of your health and mana, and fall into the ‘feeble’ status effect.]

“I managed to finish it today...”

I murmured proudly as I stared at the Incubus King’s corpse scattering into particles of light. After finishing the tedious work and becoming free, I could finally enter the dungeon. As I had planned beforehand, I finished the Incubus King grinding.

Altogether, the ten Fruit of Charming increased my magic and charm by 40. Although it wasn’t as much as the Succubus Queen’s Tattoo, it made sense as the Succubus Queen’s elixir was a tattoo invigoration elixir. What was important was that my magic had increased by 90 points by grinding the two Floor Masters. My charm also went up by 90 points, but that only gave me a headache.

The Incubus King Set was a suit with a striking black velvet jacket and pants. It was the type of shiny attire that rich people wore. Just by having it on, it felt like how cringe-worthy I was doubled. As such, I promptly extracted the skill and threw the suit into my inventory.

The skill’s effect was almost exactly like Sweet Nightmare’s effect. Sweet Nightmare stole the target’s health, while Bewilderment Bomb stole the target’s magic power. There was no need to hesitate. I immediately synthesized the two skills together.

[You obtained the Unique skill, ‘Lilith’s Temptation’!]

[Lilith’s Temptation can be used once per day and only against a member of the opposite sex with a lower charm than you. Once activated, the skill can steal up to 50% of the target’s health and magic power and afflicts the target with the ‘absolute obedience’ status effect with a 20% chance. Once afflicted with absolute obedience, the target will become your servant for eternity. However, if the target is not afflicted with absolute obedience, the target will become afflicted with the ‘awakened one’s rage’ status effect with a 40% chance. Once afflicted with awakened one’s rage, the target’s abilities are doubled in exchange for having his health halved.]

[You created a unique skill! This grand achievement causes all gods of love to focus on you. However, other competing gods force them to take a step back. You obtained 3 skill points. Current skill points: 33]

“Lilith’s Temptation... Couldn’t it have at least used a man’s name...?”

Not to mention, this skill seemed rather dangerous. Setting aside the fact that it could only be used against the opposite sex, a 20% chance to absolutely control an opponent was massive. On the other hand, the fearful ‘awakened one’s rage’ status effect had a 40% of 80%, in other words, a 32% chance to activate. I had to be extra cautious in using this skill.

The good side was that it clearly drew a line against targets with higher charm, making it so that the skill couldn’t be used against

them.

“Whatever, it’s better than not having it at all.”

I sighed and closed the skill window before leaving the Floor Master room. I had yet to get my Pure Black Desire back. The Incubus King wasn’t strong enough to make me put up any defense, but that would not be the case with Beyond’s 20th Floor Master. It was now time to get my armor back from Lin.

However, when I left the Floor Master room, I didn’t see Loretta at the Floor Shop. I thought it was strange, but I soon discovered even stranger things. The stairway to the 71st floor was gone, and so was the gate to Beyond’s 20th floor. I couldn’t believe my eyes. How could there be nothing!?

At that moment, a message I had never heard before rang out. It was message noona’s flustered voice.

[An alert to all First Dungeon explorers. As an administrative guild master has gone missing, all activities in the dungeon will halt. Until the guild master comes back, all of the dungeon’s services except the Residential Area will become unable for use. Guild masters of guilds B ranked or above should immediately gather in the Residential Area’s plaza.]

I could only have one reaction in such a situation.

“It can’t be Loretta!?”

Author's note:

By the way, one person can only have one pair of Evil Eyes!

Chapter 234. Guardian (4)

[I repeat, the dungeon will temporarily shut down due to one of the guild masters going missing. Only the Residential Area will be functioning until the guild master returns. Guild masters of guilds B ranked or above should immediately gather in the Residential Area's plaza.]

Message noona didn't answer my question. I hastened to the Residential Area, while the guild communication channel became noisy.

[Son, the dungeon's monsters suddenly disappeared.]

[Shin, have you heard?]

[Shin-nim, where are you?]

[Shin!]

Agh, annoying! I told them I didn't know anything as I ran to the plaza. When I arrived, the plaza was bustling with people. Soon, a familiar voice maintained the order.

“If you are not a B rank or higher guild master, please step back! You do not have the qualifications!”

The voice was telling the truth, yet was rather harsh. This

person... no, elf was Loretta! I ran inside the plaza as I regained my composure. When Loretta saw me, she flapped her wings in greeting.

“Shin-nim, you’re here!”

“Loretta! I was worried because you weren’t at the Floor Shop!”

“Huhu, were you worried that I went missing? There’s no way I would run away leaving my beloved Shin-nim behind!”

Hearing Loretta’s words, I couldn’t help but smile. Seeing Loretta’s bright smile, I sighed in relief and looked around. Within the plaza, other than those related to the administrative guilds, there weren’t many outsiders. According to Loretta, there were only eleven including me. It seemed there really weren’t that many guilds above B rank.

Loretta and three other administrative guild masters were present. I remembered what Loretta had once said. The First Dungeon has five administrative guilds with Fairy Garden being one of them. Since there were four administrative guild masters here, the remaining one should be the one that’s gone missing...

Other than Loretta, I knew two administrative guild masters, and I couldn’t see one of them here. The woman helping Desert Scorpion from the back, Sipua.

“Loretta...”

“It’s as you think.”

Loretta nodded with a slightly disheartened expression. She then looked at all the gathered guild masters and spoke in a louder voice.

“Since everyone’s here, each administrative guild should take three guilds to explain the situation to. Then, start searching for Sipua. I will handle Phantom’s and Revival’s guild masters.”

It seemed guilds that could grow to B rank was friendly with at least one administrative guild master. Seeing the guild masters walking towards administrative guild masters on their own, I also headed towards Loretta. At the same time, I caught sight of another guild master. A handsome man with a well-built body, clear features, long hair...

“Hi! I’m Phantom’s guild master, Philoen!”

“I’m... Kang Shin.”

And small! No, tiny! He was practically palm-sized!

“Philoen is a pixie. Are you surprised?”

“It’s my first time seeing a pixie explorer...”

“My continent had more pixies than humans! Though, it got captured by monsters over 300 years ago!”

This was the first time I saw anyone talk about a continent’s ruin so lightheartedly. I stared at him dumbfounded. Loretta explained with a wry smile.

“Pixies get power from emotions. Sad emotions lead to their death. That’s why he’s...”

“I see.”

“Hahaha, it’s fine, it’s fine. One day, I’ll save my continent!”

“I believe you will.”

300 years. If he’s stayed in the dungeon for that long, he must have gotten much stronger. When I asked Loretta by giving her a glance, she nodded her head.

“Philoen is on the dungeon’s 91st floor.”

“Hahahaha, I heard that no one’s gotten past the dungeon’s 92nd floor in the past 200 years!”

“Anyways, follow me to Fairy Garden. I’ll explain the situation there.”

When I looked around, the other administrative guild masters were also leaving with their respective guild masters. Only ordinary explorers left nearby were speaking noisily. As there was no reason for us to stay, Philoen and I also headed to Fairy Garden through the gate Loretta opened.

“The dungeon’s operations are on hold!”

“How’s the Second Dungeon? They stopped too? Damn it!”

“The Fourth Dungeon contacted us? There is no new dungeon! There won’t be any Event Dungeons for a while too!”

When I arrived at Fairy Garden, the usually relaxed atmosphere was nowhere to be seen as everyone was busily running around. With the playful elementals laughing brightly and imitating the people around them, the scene looked even more hectic. Few of the faeries caught sight of Loretta and rejoiced.

“Master, you’re here!”

“Sikatra and Lin are almost ready!”

“Are the two of them...?”

“Yep. You two, follow me.”

The place Loretta led us was the pavilion I had seen a few times.

Although it was usually crowded with people, it was currently silent. When I sat down on a chair, Philoen sat on the table. Loretta then sat across from me and let out a sigh.

“I feel like dying. I didn’t want to do anything not related to Shin-nim, but something like this happened again.”

“Does this happen often?”

“This is the second time since the dungeon’s founding! During this long, long period... Kuhum, it’s not really that long, but still! This is the second!”

Loretta emphasized another word to drive the attention away from the word ‘long’. Her ears were flapping particularly quickly.

“Sipua that bitch finally did it. She tricked all members of her administrative guild and disappeared completely!”

“Um... Can administrative guild masters leave their positions?”

“They shouldn’t. That’s why the dungeon’s operations stopped.”

Loretta paused for a moment, then continued in a slightly exhausted tone.

“For the dungeon to function properly, all administrative guild masters have to be in their appropriate positions. Even with one of

them missing, everything becomes a mess. If two of them leaves the dungeon... then the dungeon will disappear, unable to maintain itself. The reason we called the two of you here is to help us find Sipua and bring her back.”

Surprised by the weight of her words, I widened my eyes. Why did administrative guild masters disappearing affect the dungeon so much?

“Loretta... What kind of an existence are the administrative guild masters?”

“Heroes.”

I short reply sounded out from behind me. When I turned around, I saw the elf Sikatra and Lin. Lin’s current appearance surprised me greatly. Though he had always worn light loose-fitting clothing, he was now wearing tight-fitting leather clothes with a handgun by his waist... Wait, gun?

“Lin... Is that...?”

“It’s my weapon. What, got a problem?”

“Yes! Isn’t that a handgun!?”

“What, did you think guns only existed in your world?”

“But you can’t kill monsters with guns! Or is that “gun” a magical tool that only looks like a gun?”

“My world was advanced civilization with science. Your world’s and my world’s guns probably aren’t that different in structure. The people in my world couldn’t kill monsters with guns too, but I’m different. I can strengthen guns and bullets with mana.”

Lin spoke as if it was nothing. Leon naturally surfaced in my mind. Right, in a multiverse, it was unlikely that Leon’s ability was unique. It was undoubtedly an extremely rare ability, but to think that Lin also had it... A sword was more suitable for Lin than a gun. After all, he was a blacksmith!

Not to mention, a long black gun hung on his back.

“Isn’t that... a sniper rifle?”

“It’s for the worst case scenario.”

Lin spoke as if it was nothing, but I couldn’t help but feel uneasy. However, I refrained from voicing my concerns. There was something more important for me to ask.

“Lin, you just said that Loretta is... a Hero?”

“Yes, Shin-nim... I was a Hero. A Hero that couldn’t save her world, but had continued to hold the world’s power.”

Loretta spoke instead of Lin. A faint regret could be seen on her face.

“Shin-nim, do you remember what I told you before? About a time when the dungeon wasn’t what it was today, when the dungeon wasn’t even called the dungeon, a time when power was given to ability users differently.”

“I think you said that the power was given away too easily...”

“Too easily and also too much. In the end, it became so bad that the system would be destroyed if the power wasn’t retrieved. Simply put, Oldie did a terrible job... Kuhum, to be honest, the world’s enemy was so powerful that we couldn’t fight him unless we did that.”

Loretta was also a Hero like me? It wasn’t that the thought had never crossed my mind, but it was strange hearing it from her mouth. Though I had come to know more about her, it felt like I had gotten more distant.

“But Loretta is...”

“Right. The First Dungeon’s five administrative guild masters were all Heroes who had once received the dungeon’s support. Some were defeated and some escaped, but in the end, all of us had lost to the world’s enemy.”

“ ... ”

“Although I lost to him, I refused to die and give him the world’s power. I felt vexed, and I wanted to get revenge. I wanted to tear apart all who invaded my peaceful world. Even if they had their reasons, even if they were reluctant and forced into their spot, none of that mattered to me. The others felt the same, Sipua included. We wanted to help Heroes. We wanted to help those who helped Heroes.”

“That’s why...”

“After losing everything, we decided to join the Lord’s cause. We didn’t want other Heroes, other Guardians to face the same end we faced. Shin-nim wondered why the dungeon existed for side of the defenders, right? This is the reason.”

Loretta looked straight into my eyes.

“The dungeon was created by Guardians who had failed. To teach other Guardians, to test their potential, and to help them reach new heights. By giving blessings to raise their leagues, they would come to better protect their worlds.”

I finally realized.

The dungeon wasn’t a place of absolute virtue, nor was it a place of eccentrics with hidden secrets. It was a training school created by seniors who were powerlessly defeated in the same situation as

us. All in order to help us not face the same defeat they had.

“The dungeon is a practically a world maintained by the Lord’s and the administrative guild masters’ power. That’s why a single guild master running away can cause all this.”

Lin slammed his fist down on the table as he spoke unhappily. Philoen’s body shot up from the force. Although he glared at Lin, Lin didn’t react in the slightest.

“Kang Shin, there is a reason we summoned guild masters above B rank. Under the clause that all guilds should help the administrative guild maintain the dungeon’s function and existence, they are to help us in this time of crisis.”

“I thought it was a meaningless filler clause, but it actually was useful.”

I did remember such a clause being there when I signed up to create a guild. I had always thought it was for show, as I never imagined something like this would happen.

“It would be nice if just us administrative guilds could resolve the problem without involving the explorers, but even there is a huge restriction on administrative guild members leaving for another world. Most importantly, they have to be accompanied by dungeon explorers. It has to do with maintaining the dungeon’s power. In truth, if the dungeon didn’t stop its operations, none of the administrative guild masters or the administrative guild members for that matter would be able to take even a single foot outside the

dungeon.”

“To be honest, I wanted to involve Shin-nim in this matter. Even if it was for the sake of the dungeon, putting a world’s Hero in danger wasn’t ideal. But there were just too few powerful explorers who we could call on for help. Other than Shin-nim, there are three other Heroes participating this time. I couldn’t leave Shin-nim out even if I wanted to.”

“If it’s something I have to do as a guild master, I have no intention of being left out.”

I spoke clearly. Then, I added.

“But, I will run away if it’s dangerous!”

“That’s only obvious. I’ll be with you, but if things look dangerous, just think about your life. Of course, not that it will happen.”

“Am I going with Lin?”

“What, you expect me to go with that midget instead?”

“Who are you calling a midget, you stinking draconian!?”

Philoen finally exploded. While the elf Sikatra who seemed naturally close to pixies consoled him, Lin continued to ignore

Philoen as he spoke to me.

“I’m personally expecting a lot from you, so cooperate.”

“If I can be of help, of course I will. But there’s something I haven’t heard yet. Why did she escape and to where?”

“Isn’t that obvious!?”

‘I know, I just wanted to check...’ I glared at Lin and conveyed my intentions. Lin didn’t pick up on my sign at all and growled at me. Seeing the two of us, Loretta smiled and spoke.

“Sipua headed to the world conquered by the Book Walkers, the Sylon continent. She went to meet her love, Lodert Hydelcyon, a former guild master of the massive Desert Scorpion guild. Though, that’s if he’s alive.”

Yep, that’s what I thought.

If I had to choose a dungeon explorer to help me in this mission, there really was only one choice.

Thinking that I would have to once again ask Daisy for her help, a small sigh left my mouth.

Author’s note:

Shin and Lin's joyful isekai travel starts now! Will Daisy go to? The answer is... No, no, no! If Daisy goes to the Sylon continent, she'll arrive in a dangerous place far away from the place Shin and Lin arrives... T.T

Chapter 235. Guardian (5)

[It's dangerous, don't go.]

Daisy spoke in a straightforward manner.

[Kang Shin will die.]

“I asked you to explain the situation to me, not curse me.”

[Let me come. Else, I'll go alone.]

“Won't you arrive in a different place if you go?”

[So let's go together.]

Daisy stubbornly insisted, but I had no plans of taking anyone with me. I believed that it was best to go with just Lin. Anyone else would just slow us down. Though, that might not necessarily be the case with Daisy...

“A very powerful member of the administrative guild is coming with me, so you don't have to worry about my safety.”

[Book Walker, strong. And many.]

“Right, that's what I wanted, to know the situation.”

[... Book Walker, also called Slaughter Scholars.]

“Yeah, what’s so special about them?”

[Take me too.]

“No.”

Daisy was insistent. I sighed and looked back at Lin.

“Can we bring another person?”

“What? Of course not.”

“Why?”

“We won’t gain anything by having more people. I’ll be doing the fighting, so we don’t need anyone else.”

His confidence irked me slightly, but I also knew he wasn’t just boasting. However, I had an idea.

“Her name is Daisy. She’s from the Sylon continent, so wouldn’t it be helpful to have her guide us?”

“Sylon continent? There’s still an explorer other than Hydelcyon from that continent? ... What’s her level?”

I seemed to have caught Lin’s attention. I quickly asked Daisy.

“Daisy, what level are you?”

[83.]

“She’s level 83. She’s also a Beyond explorer.”

“Beyond...? There were more people like you in your guild? Fine, at least she won’t hold us back.”

Lin made it sound like there would be more people who would want to come with me. When I notified Daisy that she could join us with a bitter smile, Hwaya frighteningly spoke out.

[Let me come too!]

I then explained that we wouldn’t gain anything by letting her come. Of course, I took time to say this carefully so her feelings wouldn’t be hurt. Although Hwaya refused to accept my explanation and appealed her strength, we really couldn’t take Hwaya with us as well. There was also the fact that Hwaya’s level had gone down after she moved from the Second Dungeon to the First Dungeon.

“Just wait. I’ll come back safely, I promise.”

[I became a Dimensional Mercenary just so I could go with you in cases like this...]

“I’m not going as a Dimensional Mercenary this time. My Dimensional Travel is on cooldown, so I can’t even use it. Next time, we can take a Dimensional Mercenary mission together, okay?”

[Huu, okay... I’ll get mad if you come back hurt, got it?]

“Don’t worry.”

While I pacified Hwaya, Daisy had arrived in Fairy Garden. She seemed to be full of spirit, as she seemed to give off more vigor than usual.

“Leaving Hwaya behind, very difficult.”

“Yeah, good job.”

“She said, if I make a move on Kang Shin, she’ll kill me. But, what does making a move mean?”

“You don’t have to know.”

“... Since she’s here, let’s go. We have to find Sipua as quickly as possible and put her back in her place.”

Lin seemed a bit surprised when he saw Daisy, but he soon calmed down and urged us.

“But Lin, since there are two teams from each of the four guilds, are there eight teams going?”

“That’s right. Why?”

“... I’m just making sure. There’s no way to specify Sipua’s location?”

“That’s right. We’ll be able to sense her if we get close enough, so we can only split up the continent into eight regions and search. That’s the easiest way to do it.”

“In a world that’s being ruled by a world’s enemy, huh...”

“Yep.”

It was a seriously annoying and dangerous mission.

“If not decided, pick a location. Sion Empire, most likely.”

“You mean...”

“Lodert Hydelcyon, probably there... Most likely dead. Sion Empire is the most dangerous.”

“That’s great. I love danger.”

Lin retorted with a grin and started walking. It seemed he was going to choose the region we would search for as Daisy recommended. Daisy stared at Lin walking away, then faced me and asked.

“Kang Shin... As I thought, you like men?”

“No! What do you mean, ‘as I thought’!?”

“You two seem close.”

“Please, don’t say that...”

“Am I, third wheeling?”

“No! Thank you for coming!”

The dungeon had stopped. From the First Dungeon, all the way to the Fourth, all operations other than the Residential Area ceased. Although we had to return everything to the way it was as quickly as possible, we couldn’t rush into another world. As such, it took another thirty minutes for the eight teams to choose the

region they were going to.

“Shin-nim, please be safe.”

“Don’t worry.”

“The only thing I can do at times like this is giving Shin-nim a blessing... Hehe, come here. Hurry.”

“You have no plans to hide your real intentions, do you?”

Since it seemed she wouldn’t let me go if I didn’t let her have her way, I obediently received Loretta’s blessing. Even though I had already found out that she didn’t need to kiss me to give me the blessing, she still did so while acting as if I had never found out.

Furthermore, although I was the only one she kissed, the blessing was also applied to Lin and Daisy. I could hear Lin muttering Loretta being a scammer, but Loretta silenced him with a mana bullet.

[You received Queen Elf’s, High-Rank Blessing. For the next 4 days, you receive the following effects: You are protected against all low rank and mid-rank status effects. You can maintain your consciousness for 5 minutes after falling in a half-dead state. Your luck increases by 100. All members of the Faerie race will see you favorably. Your health and magic power recovery rate increase greatly, and you will not get exhausted easily. When attacking, your chance of landing critical hits increases.]

“I’ll see you later then. Lin, for each scratch on Shin-nim’s body, it’ll be one Last Bullet.”

“Are you trying to kill me, Noonim?”

The team consisting of Sikatra and Philoen left ahead of us, and we also used Dimensional Travel afterward. It wasn’t my Dimensional Travel skill, but a Dimensional Travel similar to the portal that linked the dungeon to other worlds.

“I’m off, Loka.”

“Be safe, nyan. The baby will be waiting for Daddy to come back!”

“You’re only two months pregnant...”

Noting the somewhat heartwarming interaction between Loka and Lin, I jumped into the portal along with Lin and Daisy.

The scenery then changed into a complete wasteland.

“Huu...”

No matter where I looked, there wasn’t a single building or creature. Lin waved his hand through the air as though the sandstorm was annoying him and put a cigarette in his mouth. His

casual movements shocked me greatly, but it seemed he didn't think it was unusual.

“Let's start after I finish this smoke.”

Daisy heard Lin's mumbling and tilted her head.

“Book Walker, coming soon. They're sensitive to change.”

“Are any of them around here strong enough to threaten me?”

“Not at all. Iana is enough.”

Daisy opened her inventory and took out a boar clad in steel. Although it was dozens of meters long when I first fought it, it had shrunk to only three meters. Now, it could only barely fit a person on its back.

“Iana, strong.”

“Yeah, yeah.”

While I was nodding to Daisy's praising of her undead again, the so-called Book Walkers began to appear. I imagined literal walking books, but that wasn't how they looked. In fact, they looked no different than regular humans.

“We haven’t seen them before.”

“There are still humans left.”

“We must add them to our database.”

Lin chomped on the cigarette he was smoking and muttered.

“Hey, blow them away. Just their way of talking annoys me.”

“Book Walkers are researchers. They study their opponents, record them in their books, find their weaknesses, and attack. To win against them... You have to kill them swiftly with various methods without giving them information. The moment they record on their books, all Book Walkers gain resistance.”

“That means you...”

“Undead I used once won’t work well next time. Abilities I used before won’t work well either. But.”

Iana abruptly charged towards the Book Walkers, and steel thorns enveloped in a black aura shot out from his body to attack them. The Book Walkers seemed surprised and took something out, but Iana reached them in an instant and skewered them before they could do anything. Daisy nodded her head in satisfaction and spoke.

“Don’t give them, time to research. Then, undead is reusable. Or, with overwhelming power, research is futile.”

“So it doesn’t matter as long as we’re powerful? They aren’t that different than normal monsters then.”

“Information sharing, annoying. High caste, stronger.”

“That’s why we were told to avoid them...? Fine, whatever. What about those books?”

At the spot which Lin pointed to were three fancy leather books which were what the Book Walkers had taken out.

“Burn them, as quickly as possible.”

The moment Daisy’s words left her mouth, Lin threw the cigarette he was smoking. When the cigarette landed on the Book Walkers’ corpses, they started to burn along with their books. I couldn’t help but feel awed at Lin’s terrifying flames. At that moment, Daisy approached me.

“What’s up, Daisy?”

“I have to say something, to Kang Shin.”

Her large red eyes were staring at me intently.

“If possible, Kang Shin shouldn’t use your power.”

“What?”

“That’s why I came.”

Daisy’s tone was extremely serious. Her eyes were fixed on me and refused to leave.

“If you use abilities, they’ll get recorded. They will gain resistance, to them. This is the same, for the world’s enemy.”

“Ah...”

“Kang Shin said one day, you’ll come back and save this place. So for now, save your strength.”

“So that’s why you wanted to come with us so much so that you can prevent them from learning about my abilities. You’re planning on using your abilities instead...?”

“Un.”

Daisy nodded. Her trust for my potential had even surprised me. While I was thinking as such, Daisy made a small smile and added. This was the first time I saw her smile, at least towards me.

“Of course, I trust you.”

“I thought I was protecting myself from being read...”

“I didn’t read, with my Evil Eyes.”

“What?”

“Kang Shin is, easy to read. Even without Evil Eyes.”

Shame!! However, what she added afterward made me flinch.

“That’s why I like you.”

“... Hm?”

“Oi, don’t flirt with another woman in front of me. I’ll shoot you.”

Lin who had finished incinerating the corpses and books scowled as he walked back to us. Daisy tilted her head and asked.

“Flirt? With another woman? Who, with who...?”

Yes, Daisy, please remain innocent!

Author’s note:

The Sylon continent! Daisy was going to stay out of it at first, but while I was writing, I realized that she could just use the dungeon's power to go through its portal instead of using her Dimensional Travel! There are, of course, the other reasons mentioned in the chapters too.

Chapter 236. Guardian (6)

Sion Empire was Sylon continent's centermost nation worthy of being called an empire. With its great power, it ceaselessly received tributes from the surrounding nations, and possessed a powerful army of knights and magicians that could protect the empire from humans and monsters that threatened its safety. Of course, most citizens of the Sion Empire were human.

“Before the Book Walkers’ invasion, they were Selone Empire’s enemy.”

“Why?”

“Grey elves, beautiful appearances, mesmerizing figures.”

“Then why are you short and un— Kuhuk!”

“Empire’s people, adored grey elves... as sex slaves.”

Daisy smacked my head and continued normally. I gritted my teeth and glared at her. Lin then spoke with a bitter smile.

“So the Book Walkers’ invasion forced them to become allies.”

“Even so, they continued to fight. Those annoying bastards, got what they deserved.”

Daisy expressed her irritation by kicking the air with her enamel boots. Pockets of exploding air showed just how much she disliked Hydelcyon.

“Lodert Hydelcyon, especially annoying. Creepy eyes. Thinking about him, even more annoying. Cancer, pervert.”

“Then why is this Sipua woman in love with him?”

“Humans aren’t born evil, he must have changed. Plus, if couples only looked at each other’s personality, wouldn’t all married couples be sages?”

“Tsk.”

I only said asked a simple question and I was showing off my inexperience with dating...! Between Daisy and Lin, isn’t my position looking weak!?

At the moment, we were in the galloping on Iana’s back. Iana was as fast as Lotte who had evolved into a Blaze Queen. I was curious how such a small boar could be so fast, but it was actually quite simple. Daisy was focusing all of her magic power on Iana.

As I said before, there wasn’t much space on Iana’s back. Thus, the three of us had to stick close together. Lin was in the front, I was in the middle, and Daisy was behind me holding onto my back.

“Kang Shin, don’t stick so close to me. You’re giving off a weird

scent and it's annoying me.”

“You’re saying this too, Lin!? I’ve been trying to control this thing too!”

“Did you eat an air freshener or something?”

“Don’t make the same joke as my father!”

While I was yelling at Lin, Daisy spoke in a murmuring voice.

“I want to, take out Laki.”

“Laki? What’s that?”

“It’s a world’s enemy we turned into an undead.”

Lin shouted, almost freaking out.

“Don’t! If you do, they’ll notice us immediately!”

“Even though it’s a weak one?”

“Weak one my ass! There is no such thing when it comes to worlds’ enemies! You, it looks like I need to give you another Hero training!”

“When did you ever teach me!?”

Wait, now that I think of it, he may or may not have given me some good advice here and there... As I didn't want to admit it, I just chucked it to the back of my mind. At that moment, Daisy cut in.

“Book Walkers, appear in groups. My information, already known. Will come to capture me.”

“Capture you?”

“Book Walkers, few females. Mating with other races, able to reproduce.”

“Ugek.”

“They have my data. Will assume, easy capture.”

Daisy's expression was extremely calm as she said that. She told me not to use my power. Was she relying on Lin's unconfirmed strength? I tilted my head, and Daisy continued.

“Data renewal, did not happen. Even with one level difference, it takes while, to adapt. From back then, I grew a lot.”

“Ah, I get it now.”

“Evil Eyes, god’s true name, hard to calculate and adapt. True name holder, Evil Eye holder, I’m only one in this continent.”

“So even if they know about god’s true names and Evil Eyes, it’s hard to record them in their books and come up with a countermeasure?”

“Yes. That’s why, I can hold out for a long time.”

That seemed to be a common point between world’s enemies. Although it was comparatively easy to counter the dungeon’s system, powers that originated from the dungeon yet surpassed its control, god’s true names, Evil Eyes, and Enigma were hard for them to counter... Although I had another question in mind, there was something else I wanted to ask.

“Daisy, can I ask you something?”

“If I know the answer, sure... My breasts are big too.”

“I’m not curious about your chest size! And I already know its big!”

“... How did you know?”

“You better answer well, Kang Shin. Where my bullet will go in will depend on your answer.”

“It’s already decided that you’ll shoot me!?”

I dug my own grave...! I was just referring to the first time I saw Daisy! Damn, if Loretta found out about this, my eyes will be in danger again...! I desperately changed the topic.

“That’s not what’s important! My question is, are god’s true names and Evil Eyes part of the dungeon’s system?”

Daisy tilted her head at my question and answered slowly.

“Evil Eyes and true names, similar principle. An outside support, borrowing the dungeon’s system.”

“Can you be more detailed?”

“As expected of a Beyond explorer, she knows her stuff. I’ll explain the rest though.”

Lin spoke as he took out a handgun. I was worried that he’d shoot it at me, but thankfully, he aimed it up and shot empty air.

“There’s nothing there, righ... Ah.”

“Oh, you can feel it now? Right, there was a sentry.”

Iana accelerated the moment Lin's words left his mouth. From far away, a menacing killing intent was surging towards us. I could even feel magic. Lin shot bullet after bullet, annihilating each killing intent and spoke as if nothing was wrong.

“Gods from myths have once existed. We don't know the meaning of the divinity they obtained, but we know that they know many things, see many things, and exist at the same time in many eras. The only strange thing is that even though they can do all these things, they cannot appear with their real bodies.”

“Real existences, real bodies...”

“Even before the dungeon existed, there were those who obtained gods' true names. What the dungeon calls achievements, when one built them up until they reached a god's domain, the god bestowed that person with his name. When the dungeon was created... the Lord and the gods came to an agreement.”

“Did the gods agree to accept achievements from the dungeon?”

“Precisely. The gods agreed to accept them, but they also set harsh requirements. After all, they couldn't give out their names to just anyone. People befitting their existences have to take their names for them to raise their divinity.”

“You mean they're lending out their names to people who deserve them so they can spread their names far and wide?”

“Looks like your intelligence stat isn’t just for show. That’s right.”

Lin reloaded his gun in a smooth motion and continued to shoot. Daisy whispered in my ear.

“Can’t come up with, countermeasure. Can’t see his attacks. If they die before writing on their books, it’s meaningless.”

“I’ll keep that in mind.”

“Just like that, it became easy for dungeon explorers to obtain gods’ true names. But, they aren’t part of the dungeon’s power. A god’s true name is a god’s true name. Nothing more, nothing less. The dungeon’s titles are lower grade copies of gods’ true names.”

“I see...”

I was shocked to hear that titles were lesser copies of gods’ true names. However, Lin wasn’t finished yet.

“Evil Eyes are by-products of myths. For example, let’s see... Who does your world have known for its Evil Eyes of Petrification?”

“Um, the basilisk from European legends, the Medusa from the more famous Greek mythology... Ah.”

“There’s also Irish mythology’s Balor of the Evil Eye, Judaism’s

Sariel... Do you get it now? Why Evil Eyes are treated so specially. Obtaining an Evil Eye is the same as obtaining a god's true name. Although there are other rewards in the dungeon that originates from myths or legends, other than Evil Eyes, most are lesser copies like the dungeon's titles. Some even say Evil Eyes are even harder to obtain than gods' true names."

"Then, Evil Eyes also..."

"They also carry bountiful divine power. They're different from the dungeon's objects. Even I don't have Evil Eyes."

There was no way I would miss this chance.

"I have them!"

"You bastard...!"

Daisy also joined in.

"I have them too, huhu."

"This girl!"

Lin's gunshots stopped and Iana stopped running so quickly. Before I even noticed, we had arrived in front of crumbled castle walls.

“Ellian City. Resistance Army, if alive, all here.”

“There are still survivors in this world controlled by Book Walkers?”

“Underground base, sturdy. The greatest magic power left to humanity, all here... Lodert Hydelcyon, saw here last.”

Her words were like a finishing blow. Lin grinned.

“Well done. Bringing you along was the right choice, Grey Elf.”

“Call me, Ectradion.”

“Right, Ectradion. Sipua is here, I can feel it. It looks like we’ll get things over with today.”

“That’s great!”

Rather than that, didn’t that mean Lodert Hydelcyon is alive? He really was harder to kill than a cockroach. While I was feeling exhausted, Lin took out another handgun, held it in his right hand, and tensed up his shoulder. I couldn’t help but ask.

“Are there that many?”

“Like a nest of cockroaches. It’s going to get annoying.”

“Let me participate too. Kang Shin, just watch.”

“Yeah, yeah, I know.”

In case I decided to fight, Daisy made a frightening expression, shoving her face up to mine and insisting solemnly. I quickly took a step back and nodded. I was being treated like a burden! While I shook my head, Daisy opened her inventory and took out a giant mantis. It was Meki.

“Meki will handle the front. You can go wild.”

“Perfect. Let’s go!”

Lin immediately jumped over the crumbled castle wall and charged into the city. From all sides, Book Walkers began to make their appearance.

“The human we’ve been waiting for!”

“The human who killed many of our kin is laughing!”

“It will take a long time to analyze his data!”

“The female who escaped last time came back!”

“Our data says that she’s an excellent female. It looks like she grew even more!”

Lin couldn’t hold himself back and burst their heads open as he shouted.

“Aaaaaak! These guys’ way of talking irritates me!”

Lin’s shots never missed their targets and had terrifying destructive power. No more than a single bullet was needed to kill a Book Walker. Since they were gathered here to find and kill the Resistance Army, they must have been elites amongst the Book Walkers, but Lin still only needed a single bullet to kill each one.

“We cannot allow attacks and take down the damage! We must watch from afar and record!”

“Data remembers that a kin has established a safe distance!”

“Dead! Already dead!”

“Sounds good! More kin are coming out! We can analyze his data by writing down small pieces!”

“I won’t let you! Meki!”

[Guooooooooooooo!]

Meki, the Mantis Queen that had been reborn as an undead, roared furiously and spread her wings open. At the same time, the aura of wind Meki shot out sliced apart a few of the weaker Book Walkers. The Mantis Queen also had gotten stronger after becoming an undead!

“Meki, kill the recorders!”

[Guooooo!]

Meki roared in confirmation and charged towards the Book Walkers. Every time Meki’s giant scythe sliced through the air, the buildings left standing were cut down along with the heads of Book Walkers.

“That one’s strong too! A form we had no record of!”

“A powerful cutting power! We require resistance to cutting power!”

“We require a special entity! Resistance won’t cut it!”

“We don’t know when new kin will be born! We don’t know if any kin knows when that is!”

“It’s two days later! We must input new data!”

“Time, I won’t give you!”

After Daisy's shout, Meki got even faster. Meki swung her scythes almost as quickly as Lin fired his guns. No, perhaps, Meki was even quicker. While I watched the Book Walkers being torn apart, Daisy spoke.

“The moment they record, everyone obtains resistance. What's scarier is, newly born entities. Transcends resistance, an ability akin to total immunity.”

“So the ones born later are stronger.’

“Un. They learn, they evolve, in the blink of an eye.”

“There's no end to them, damn it!”

“Prevent them from taking records, defeat a suitable amount. Then, move to underground passageway.”

“Got it!”

Lin became faster. The Book Walkers, who were on the defensive trying to write down Lin's and Meki's movements, quickly had their heads cut off.

“Observation recording, not accurate, but still forms resistance. If possible, eliminate all.”

“Let’s break through first!”

We cut down all the Book Walkers blocking our way and charged into the city. The Book Walkers’ endless appearances made me reminisce the Panan continent’s nightmare, but none of them could do anything against Lin’s bullets and Meki’s scythe. However, it was frightening that more and more of them were beginning to dodge Meki’s attacks.

“Resistance, beginning to build up. Meki’s movement pattern, must change.”

“Is this the observation recording you mentioned?”

“Un. Abilities used even a little bit, Book Walkers will write down. Impossible to prevent.”

Daisy spoke as she gritted her teeth.

“To prevent it, an ability transcending ordinary comprehension is needed.”

“Gods’ true names and Evil Eyes...”

“And Kang Shin’s power, Enigma. Or that Dragon Horn’s power.”

“Dragon Horn!? Did you just call me Dragon Horn!?”

At that moment, Meki, who had just shot out two aura blades with her scythes and completely decimated the Book Walkers in the front, unexpectedly charged towards us. While the Book Walkers assumed their observation recording stance, Daisy rolled on the ground. Meki had disappeared into her inventory...

And we had unknowingly entered underground.

Chapter 237. Guardian (7)

Even as I was perplexed by the sudden change in scenery, I immediately spread my mana out to detect the surrounding terrain and potential enemies. By the time I understood what had happened, Daisy pulled my arm down and explained.

“Underground base, safe... close to safe.”

“What about the Book Walkers?”

“Magic underground, maintains darkness.”

“What does darkness have to do with anything?”

“Dragon Horn, ignite fire.”

“You bastard, don’t call me Dragon Horn... Ho.”

Lin barked at Daisy and opened his palm as if to ignite a fireball. Then, he exclaimed in surprise.

“I’ll admit, I’m impressed. Putting this much restriction on me...”

“Under the assumption we couldn’t win, the base was created. Here, very hard to ignite fire.”

“So what does being unable to ignite fire have to do with Book Walkers?”

“If dark, can’t read books.”

I instantly remembered sneaking a spearmanship training manual into my bed to read it at night. When Mother discovered it, she smacked my back. Good times... Wait!

“Book Walkers aren’t ordinary humans! How does darkness stop them from reading books!?”

“Can you, see me?”

“I can’t, but considering your level, I can clearly feel your presence and even the outline of your body... Eh?”

This was strange. I was now level 71. Physical darkness should pose no hindrance to my sight. Wait, what did Daisy say at first?

“A magic that maintains darkness...”

“Here, Book Walkers can’t read books. Book Walkers that can’t read books, resistances disappear. Also, cannot be recorded.”

Daisy nodded as if she had been waiting for me to come to this conclusion. I realized that the magic in this place wasn’t simple

and voiced another question.

“That’s why a perpetually dark base was created?”

“To leave behind, Resistance Army. If Hydelcyon didn’t die, he must be here.”

“So that’s why those Book Walkers aren’t coming in here.”

“Creating fire through darkness magic, weakens Book Walkers extremely. Resistance Army wins easily. Their mission of first priority, annihilating invaders.”

With that, Daisy pointed to the side. It was at this point that I realized we were surrounded. It was partly because they were concealing themselves so thoroughly without exerting any signs of their presence, but also because Daisy had interrupted me before I could spread my mana out that far.

Furthermore, a magic that dulled one’s senses seemed to be included in the darkness magic.

“There are so many, much more than I thought. Surprising.”

“This voice... Daisy Ectradion!?”

A deep voice of a man cut through the darkness. Daisy lightly nodded.

“Fourth Dungeon explorer, race of long lived fools, a grunt, Sinan Kingdom’s knight.”

It seemed the voice belonged to a Fourth Dungeon explorer who was the knight of a ruined kingdom and a member of a race with high life expectancy.

“Can’t you just say my name!? I am... I was Sinan Kingdom’s knight, Beren Matiz. And you are?”

“My allies. Any more, secret. We require information.”

“What, both you and Hydelcyon come to visit after a long time and that’s all you guys can say? You’re making me cry...”

“Right, Hydelcyon, information.”

Daisy threw something to him. The knight received it and shouted in a shocked voice.

“This is... gold!?”

“Grunt, now, what floor?”

“21st. I can barely enter the Residential Area now. Don’t tell me, you’re still climbing the dungeon?”

“As I thought, still a beggar. In exchange for gold, Hydelcyon.”

The grunt... Beren Matiz audibly gulped.

“You... Are you still on bad terms with him?”

“Information.”

Daisy filled a leather pouch with gold coins and shook it flamboyantly.

“Hydelcyon, a kite with string detached. Lost his explorer qualification. But me, promising future. Fat guild... Choose wisely.”

“You’re straightforward as always... Everyone, put your weapons down. They aren’t our enemies.”

In truth, I had already realized why I hadn’t felt their presence before. There were the reasons I mentioned before, but it was also because they simply didn’t have the skills to make me wary. Most of them were as good as that Beren Matiz, if not slightly weaker. Simply put, even a melting tuna could send them all to hell.

“Ectradion, I don’t know what happened, but don’t hate him too much. He didn’t look good. He’s even spending his days quietly here.”

“A woman, came to find him.”

“Yeah. She seemed extremely beautiful, but it was almost as if she was bewitched by something. I don’t know why she’s so obsessed to that Hydelcyon who lost everything...”

“... What are they, scheming?”

“Scheming? Please.”

He replied with a smirk.

“Everyone here is barely living on buried in darkness. How can someone be scheming anything here?”

“... That’s fine. Location.”

“I’ll tell you.”

The underground base seemed to be bigger than I initially thought. After listening to the information Beren Matiz told for a long time, Daisy nodded and sent me a message.

[They are, not lying.]

[Couldn’t you have just read everything with your Evil Eyes to

begin with?]

[Few people know, about my Evil Eyes. Only Hydelcyon and maybe couple others. Process of obtaining information, more natural to exist... Also, money, I wanted to give regardless.]

Right, since Hydelcyon and Daisy have fought together in the front line, Hydelcyon undoubtedly knew about Daisy's Evil Eyes. However, grunts like Beren Matiz and the others likely didn't even know Daisy's abilities.

Furthermore, as Daisy said, her intention was to give gold to any explorers who could enter the Residential Area. That way, he would be able to buy food for everyone else... I nodded silently and watched Daisy and Beren Matiz's exchange.

"With this much... Everyone at the base will be able to eat fully for a few years."

"Explorers, how many are left?"

"We have two in the Third Dungeon, three in the Fourth. We're all in the lower levels and barely make enough silver to feed everyone. Ectradion, you saved us. We were in a pinch because we can't even fight monsters in the dungeon right now."

"We came, to solve that... Sorry we couldn't come earlier. One day, we'll come back. Everyone will be saved... by this person."

As Daisy calmly apologized calmly, she pointed towards me. Beren Matiz asked with a curious voice.

“Him? Why?”

“That’s all you need, to know. We’ll leave, now. Soon, you’ll be able, to enter the dungeon.”

“Y-Yeah. Since you said you’ll take care of it, thanks. This place might be dark and gloomy, but I hope you have a nice time... Please, don’t fight here.”

The underground base was huge, but quiet. There was no one walking around, and we could only hear faint moans occasionally. Daisy spoke without even blushing slightly.

“Here, dark and quiet. No matter how many times you do it, you can’t make babies. The only thing they can do, is that. For a long time, it’s been like this.”

“I get it, you don’t have to comment on everything...”

I despaired, wanting to shut my ears. At that moment, Daisy grabbed my arm and asked as she shook it meekly.

“Kang Shin, is that fun? Why do men and women, when alone, always do that? The goal, is it not to reproduce? The reason sex slaves are expensive, is that. Why are men so crazy about that? Why do women love it so much?”

“I said you don’t have to comment on everything. Do you think I’ll comment on everything instead!? Unfortunately, I don’t know either! Unfortunately!”

“Oi, can you stop being such a virgin and shut up?”

Kuuuuu! I knew it, I shouldn’t have come with these two! I clenched my fists and followed them. The desolate stillness and occasional moans seemed to drive me insane. At that moment, thankfully, Lin, who was leading the way after hearing the approximate location from Daisy, came to a stop.

“So you really were here, Sipua...”

“Lin...?”

Although we were still enshrouded in darkness, we had gotten close a person’s presence. This powerful presence was telling me that she wasn’t an ordinary person.

“Lin, did you come to take me back?”

“What, you thought we’d just leave you be?”

To be honest, as the aura she was giving off was similar to my level, it made me question whether she really was an administrative guild master. However, it was probably that Lin

and other members of Fairy Garden were strange. After all, Loretta mentioned before that I would be able to defeat the administrative guild Lost Valley's guild master, Eleine, when I became level 80.

Although I felt a bit sorry saying this, I somewhat understood why they couldn't beat their worlds' enemies even after receiving great powers from the dungeon. Although I thought all administrative guild masters were monsters like Loretta, now that I thought about it more carefully, rather than their personal strengths, the share of the dungeon's power they received when they became an administrative guild master seemed to be more important.

“Sipua, you should know what situation the dungeon is in right now.”

“Did the dungeon fall, Lin?”

“Everything stopped. A place that must help train the Heroes and Guardians of countless worlds stopped just because of you.”

“Hmph, that's it? I was bound to the dungeon for over 2,500 years. Compared to that, the dungeon only had a day's worth of damages.”

Sipua's cold tone pierced Lin. Then, she turned her sharp gaze towards me.

“You came too, Earth's Hero. I thought you would come. Loretta,

that wicked bitch! I apologize, but it had the opposite effect. I can't forgive everything that's happened because of you!"

The reason Loretta sent me? She had done so simply because there weren't enough people, but it seemed Sipua was gravely mistaken. Not to mention, she sure was shameless. Only a short time had passed since the incident, but the positions of the victim and the assailant was completely flipped in her mind. To her, it seemed everything she had done for Hydelcyon was justified.

Even if I explained, she would interpret it as she wanted, and it would only be counterproductive. As such, I stayed silent. However, Lin snorted and rebutted.

"They say if you save a stranger, he'll turn into your enemy. You sure are audacious, Sipua. He's a Hero, someone you should support... And that Lodert Hydelcyon is a brainless fool who tried to bully a Hero for his own benefits."

"Lin...!"

"We don't have time to spare, so I won't be giving you any time to say goodbye. We're leaving. Now."

"Lin! Please!"

Lin gritted his teeth. His handgun was firmly grasped in his hand.

“You should know my personality. You should have been satisfied that Lodert Hydelcyon got off by just being kicked out to his continent... Our patience ends here. Sipua, this is it.”

A volatile tension filled the atmosphere. Lin's change in demeanor was so intimidating that I was even having trouble breathing. Daisy buried her face behind my back to avoid his killing intent.

Sipua was also affected. Lin's killing intent caused her to freeze completely. When his killing intent diminished slightly from its peak, she barely managed to mutter some words.

“Please... Lin. Look at me. I love him...!”

“Is your determination to annihilate all worlds' enemies so weak that it'll crumble because of a single fool?”

“In the first place, I was pressured by the other four into forming an oath to the Lord! I've already done so much. Lin, please...!”

“I'll give you one day.”

Lin gave a cut-throat answer as if to say it was his last bit of kindness.

“Wrap everything up within a day. You can strengthen him with the power you have left too. As long as he's alive, a day will come when he's freed. Again, you have one day.”

“Lin...!”

“In 24 hours, you’ll be going back with us. I won’t agree to any other requests, and the moment you protest, I’ll drag you back myself.”

“... Uk!”

Sipua immediately ran back as if she didn’t want to spend even a single more second with us. At first, I thought she was going back to spend what little time she had left with Lodert Hydelcyon. However, that wasn’t it. Not long after Sipua disappeared, he appeared in her place. His entrance was so smooth that I thought they were playing some tag battle!

“Daisy Ectradion...!”

He shouldn’t have been able to see her face, but it seemed he realized who she was from her presence as he muttered Daisy’s name emotionally.

“Lodert, Hydelcyon.”

Daisy spoke. As always, she was calm to the extreme.

“Your mind, it clear up?”

“You refused me so adamantly, and the one you chose is him? That Hero? You chose a reckless fool who can’t make heads nor tails of the situation?”

“Un. You’re not, my type. Your face is, dirty. Your actions are, dirty. Your personality is, dirty. Your mind is, dirty. Though strangely, your mind is better now.”

It seemed he didn’t have much to say in response as he simply glared in our direction. Although I couldn’t read his expression in the darkness, I could tell from his voice that he was glaring at me with killing intent.

“You, didn’t I tell you not to involve yourself with Daisy Ectradion...!?”

“Ah, thanks to your advice, I got myself an excellent guild member. That’s the only thing I’m thankful to you for. Also, I’m sorry, but I don’t want to breathe the same air as you, so can you screw off, please?”

“Kuuk!”

As I felt sorry just telling him off, I also kicked casually. Seeing him flying back through the darkness, I asked Daisy.

“How was it?”

“12, out of 10.”

“I’m not talking about my shot. Thanks though.”

“His mind, quite clear... Power of love?”

“Do you even know what love is?”

“Un. In darkness, what man and woman do.”

“Wrong!”

I burned with a sense of duty to fix Daisy’s distorted knowledge. Lin then stopped me with a head smack.

“We should go rest too. I’m tired.”

“Why did you give her a day, Lin?”

“It’s sad not having a single day off in 2,500 years... Also, if we bring her back as she is now, she’ll remain a lit ember ready to burst into flames. But if we give her more than a day, the dungeon and many of its explorers will receive critical blows. That was the best I could do for her.”

Words that were completely unexpected from the way he talked to her earlier was coming out of Lin’s mouth. I was so surprised that I imagined Lin’s current expression and murmured.

“... Lin.”

“It’s just my whim. Noonim will beat me to death if she found out... but I couldn’t help it because I remembered Loka’s face.”

“I’m curious about what happened between Lin and Lokanyan. There’s also something I want to talk about with Lin... Since we have time, why don’t we go drink together? I secretly snagged a whiskey that Father had been saving.”

“That’s the best offer you’ve made since we met. Good.”

Daisy shook my arms fiercely and asked.

“As I thought, Kang Shin likes men...”

“NO!”

“For the two of you, I will leave... I want to check, those that I knew, alive or dead.”

“Come back before it’s too late.”

“Un.”

Daisy hopped away into the darkness and her presence eventually

disappeared. Lin and I also began to wander in search of a nice place to drink. In this dark space, where one couldn't tell day apart from night, only time was passing steadily.

Author's note:

What happened between Lin and Lokanyan? This author is curious too!

Even if you (the readers) discovered something in this chapter, please be patient for the other readers!!

Chapter 238. Guardian (8)

The bottle of whiskey I brought with me was emptied by the time I detected an unexpected change. While Lin and I were exchanging our final glass, I began to vaguely see Lin's face. At first, I thought I had gotten accustomed to being in the dark, but that wasn't it. Lin muttered as he stared at my face.

“Up close, you look like the incarnation of misfortune.”

“Lin also looks like a sissy.”

The underground base got brighter ever so slightly. The darkness from magic that dulled one's senses was slowly transforming into natural darkness. There was only one reason this would be happening.

“It's a good thing we finished the bottle.”

“Yep, one has to finish a bottle once he opens it.”

We exchanged such words as if we had already discussed it, and stood up after throwing the bottle and glasses on the ground. Lin was gritting his teeth.

“That crazy bastard...”

“It might not be too late. Let's hurry.”

Lin and I rushed in union. Meanwhile, Daisy messaged us.

[Found Book Walkers. Ceiling, being broken through.]

The moment we received her message, the ceiling fell with a thud along with several Book Walkers. Before I could say anything, Lin's two handguns shot flaming bullets. By the time the magazine ran out, the Book Walkers had all become corpses, but Lin clicked his tongue as he reloaded.

“These guys got faster. It must be that damned resistance or whatever. How annoying.”

“I should also—”

“You stay still. Don't reveal your abilities in front of them.”

“This really is annoying. I can't even fight them when they're right in front of me... Ah!”

We left a passageway and entered a wider residential area. It was the place where we had heard moaning sounds before. In the corner was a gruesomely shredded corpse of a man. That was it. Lin murmured calmly.

“The woman was taken.”

“...”

I didn't open my mouth. If I did, I felt like I would have shouted at the top of my lungs to tear apart this silence. Afterwards, in just three minutes, we found over ten corpses. They were all of men.

I asked Lin, gritting my teeth and clenching my fists.

“Administrative guild master's power... Is there a way to retrieve it?”

“There is one way.”

Lin replied as he reloaded his guns again and shot down the spear of ice coming towards him.

“Killing her.”

The magic had disappeared completely. There were huge gaping holes in the ceiling. The underground base was no longer safe from light. Beyond the passageway where light and darkness coexisted, the one who sent the ice spear flying appeared. It was Sipua.

“Lin, I didn't want to do this.”

“You've gotten unsightly, Sipua.”

Lin's words didn't carry any emotion. He aimed his gun at Sipua and asked.

"Tell me, why did you get rid of the magic?"

"I made a deal, Lin. It was the only thing I could do for our happiness."

"... I take it to mean you made a deal with the world's enemy?"

At Lin's words, Sipua nodded. Then, she spread her arms out. Countless crystals of ice radiating brilliant light filled the space around her. Just like the god's true name Lodert Hydelcyon had, it seemed she also had the ability to wield ice.

"I can't win against you with my strength, so I needed someone to defeat you."

"And Hydelcyon?"

"The darkness magic was very formidable. He had to use his god's true name."

"[Scizarnath](#) must be lamenting."

Lin looked at Sipua in contempt and spoke with scorn. Then, he turned to face me.

“Find Ectradion and go back. The world’s enemy will appear soon.”

“Right.”

I knew very well what position I was in. I also knew that the world’s enemy of Panan continent was a special case. Against monsters that obtained resistance against me if I didn’t kill it in one blow, I didn’t dare be so adventurous. It wasn’t my role to face them.

Above all, finding Daisy was currently the most important thing.

“No, I won’t let you go. You have to suffer more.”

“Kang Shin, run away! Now!”

Immediately, a brilliant light erupted from Sipua’s body. The underground base enshrouded in darkness became as bright as day. I heard a message, one that I thought I wouldn’t hear for a while.

[You entered the EX rank Event Dungeon, ‘Cemetery’! Before the dungeon is cleared, no one can exit!]

No, it wasn’t the familiar message noona’s voice. This voice was... Sipua’s voice!

“You, just how much are you going to abuse your power!?”

“This is it. Once everyone who came to find me dies, I won’t need it anymore!”

Just to be sure, I opened the gate to the dungeon. I couldn’t enter it. I couldn’t use Return either. It seemed there was only one way for me to leave this place. I quickly messaged Daisy.

[Daisy, are you okay!?)

[Too many, Book Walkers. Space is too small, can’t take out all undead. I will use, god’s power.]

[Make sure you live! And...!]

[... Hydelcyon, found him.]

With that, Daisy’s messages cut off. Damn it! I didn’t think Daisy would lose to someone like Hydelcyon, but the resistance I felt when I kicked him earlier made me uneasy.

I didn’t know what Sipua did to strengthen him, but with his god’s true name and the Book Walkers helping him, Daisy would undoubtedly have trouble dealing with the situation. Everything was extremely annoying!

“Sipua, what you did cannot be undone. From now on, I won’t

treat you like one of us.”

“Lin, you should have done so the moment you saw me. Now, it’s too late! I’ve already surpassed you!”

“What...!?”

In the next moment, the entire space exploded. I quickly summoned Ruyue and surrounded myself in a wall of ice, and Lin also protected himself with a wall of fire. However, the explosion only served as a signal. Immediately after Sipua’s attack, something shot towards Lin like lightning.

“Kuhahaha! Too easy! Too visible! Draconian, draconians are surprising!”

“You... Trash!”

Despite the lighthearted tone, the voice carried an immense pressure. The owner of the voice was a titan, carrying a book on one hand and a sword on the other. The moment I saw him, I could clearly feel his aura.

He was the world’s enemy.

“Kuk!”

“You’re moving like when you killed our kin! But you won’t be

able to defeat me!”

Although Lin’s movements were quick to the point I could barely see him, the titan easily caught up to Lin. Furthermore, the titan’s attacks flew in from angles Lin couldn’t easily dodge, and eventually tore Lin’s leather armor and shed blood. Lin distanced himself from the titan with a strong kick as he gritted his teeth.

“Sipua...!”

“You and I have fought together many times. In my head, your movements and your twin handguns are recorded clearly!”

“Puhahaha! The dungeon sure is interesting! Its administrators are interesting too! Truly interesting!”

“Shut it!”

Lin’s twin guns continuously spat out bullets. Shockingly, the world’s enemy received them directly without even trying to dodge them and wasn’t injured in the slightest.

“With data, we have nothing to fear from your attacks! With my power, I can easily defeat you! Draconian, you’ll have to die!”

“Don’t think guns are my only weapon, idiot!”

Lin threw away his twin handguns and charged towards him.

Flames erupted around him as he attacked the world's enemy. I could easily tell that Lin's flames were of EX rank. The Demon Lord would have to give up one arm to ignite such flames? And he was using it as he pleased!?

What was even more shocking was that the world's enemy wasn't fazed at all by the EX rank flames. His resistance had gone past the point of shocking and had reached the level of impossibility!

“Kuhahaha! Futile! Not only your guns, but your flames and martial arts have all been remembered! That bitch gave me all the data I needed!”

“If you think some record on a book is enough to defeat me, you're gravely mistaken!”

After Lin shouted with a voice filled with rage, he disappeared. In the next instant, a flash of Lin's foot appeared, enveloped in scarlet flames. The titan's shoulder exploded.

“Kuaaaaak! That hurt!”

“I'll show you a power your trivial ability can't resist!”

“Annoying! Draconian is annoying!”

The Book Walker opened his book. Even as he was being injured by Lin's attacks, he held up his sword and wrote something down

on his book. For every phrase he jotted down, his injuries shockingly healed. He was even beginning to catch up to Lin's hastened speed.

“If this is all, this is the end! You can't win against me!”

“I'm not done yet... You damned bastard!”

At this rate, Lin would lose. Since we won't be able to leave unless we defeated the world's enemy, if I used Overlord and joined him...!

“You should play with me.”

Sipua noticed my movements and created countless spears of ice in the air. I used Ruyue's power to stop them as I questioned her.

“Daisy couldn't read your thoughts or Hydelcyon's thoughts. Is that your work?”

“I sent Lodert to you on purpose. To trick you into believing us.”

“Defending against Evil Eyes...”

“I'm originally more skilled in defense than offense! So, Earth's Hero, you should give up on defeating me and helping Lin!”

Her mana was indeed boundless. Solely to stop me from approaching Lin and the world's enemy, she filled the area with ice. Even if I pushed them away with Ruyue's ability and used Divine Speed to charge forward, with my current ability, I couldn't deal with the endlessly respawning wall of ice unless I used Overlord.

"I acknowledge that you're a talented explorer, but I've lived for 2,500 years as an administrative guild master! You will never be able to obtain what you desire!"

"Kuk, S-Sipua."

When a man's voice suddenly eked out, she revealed an opening. I didn't miss this opportunity and materialized Ruyue.

"Break through!"

[Un! Haaaaap!]

Immediately after materializing in the air, Ruyue let out a spirited shout and spread her arms out. In the next instant, the wall of ice trapping us exploded entirely.

Sipua and a heavily beaten Lodert Hydelcyon appeared in front of us. As the saying went, love made one stupid. Sipua had completely forgotten about me and was hugging Hydelcyon tightly.

"Lodert, how did this happen to you!?"

“When I was coming back after destroying the darkness magic, that damned bitch...!”

“... Daisy Ectradion, I’ll be sure to kill that wench!”

“Hey, Bitch and Son of a Bitch. You think you fuckers can just kill my precious guild member!?”

I finally exploded. Although it might be a bit too early to use these skills, I felt okay using them now.

“Caduceus, Overlord!”

The moment I shouted the names of these skills, my body grew enough to pierce through the underground base’s ceiling. Everyone present focused their attention on me. Sipua, especially, had a shocked expression.

“Y-You! How can you have that power...!?”

“I’m different than trash like Hydelcyon!”

“But it’s too late! You’ve lost!”

The world’s enemy raised his voice and laughed. He spoke as he threw what was in his hands towards me. The shape of the “thing” he threw seemed all too familiar.

“I wonder what kind of power you have! I hope it’s better than this dead lizard’s!”

“Dead lizard... You’re talking about Lin...?”

My hands trembled. I shouted louder than I ever had.

“YOU’RE TALKING ABOUT LIN!?”

[You used Frozen Roar! All enemies in the battlefield freezes in place. All allies temporarily become super-armored and have all abilities increased by 50%. Your chance of landing a critical hit doubles when fighting enemies affected by Frozen Roar.]

[Frozen Roar is suppressed by the world’s enemy’s overwhelming power! Although Overlord’s power offset his power, Frozen Roar’s effect has been halved!]

In that instant, as ice descended around me, the surrounding became shrouded in darkness. Did my rage finally create a supernatural effect? Of course not.

[Magic recovery, complete. Book Walkers, weakened.]

“Oh, Daisy. I love you!”

[... Kang Shin, I don’t know love, yet. So, I apologize.]

“I didn’t mean it like that. It was a... cheer!”

[Human language, too difficult...]

I gave a short reply to Daisy who rejected me seriously. Then, I infused Sharana into my spear. As both fire and lightning radiated light, I couldn’t make satisfying destructive power in this place. Furthermore, they couldn’t do what I wanted to do.

Thus, what I needed to wield now was the power of wind! Sharana’s aura strengthened the power of Enigma to the limit and created a threatening whirlpool.

“Even with the darkness back, you won’t be able to win! Compared to the lizard, your power is too weak!”

“But I can hold you back for a bit!”

Along with my reply, a wind aura that converted into a whirlpool shot out from my spear and cut through the darkness. Even if the world’s enemy was much stronger than me, this was the first time I used my power since I came to this world. Plus, the purpose of the wind aura I just shot out wasn’t to tear him apart. Like I said, it was just to tie him in his place for a moment.

As I had even used Divine Speed, neither Sipua nor Hydelcyon could react to it. Though the world’s enemy snorted and tried to strike it down with his palm, he body was halted in the process.

Confused, he looked around his body and soon burst into laughter.

“So you aren’t completely talentless after all. But this is it! I doubt you’ll be able to do anything by just holding me down! Kuhahaha... haaak!”

Within the darkness, a single bang of a gunshot rang out. The titan, who was laughing just a moment ago, had his head shattered into pieces.

Using this opportunity, I grabbed the world’s power that popped out of the titan’s body. The expressions of Hydelcyon and Sipua, who had watched everything blankly, turned pale.

“You killed... the world’s enemy... Someone even the entire continent couldn’t kill, so easily...!”

“T-This... is... Im-Impossible...”

“How so?”

In the direction where the bullet came flying, Lin walked out with the sniper rifle he had been hiding now hanging on his back. Ignoring the reestablished darkness magic, Lin lit the cigarette in his mouth. Sipua shouted in utter shock.

“Lin, how are you alive? You certainly died! I saw it with my two eyes! Plus, how could you kill him so easily!?”

“Huh? Let me ask too, Sipua. How is it any of your business? Even if you knew, nothing would change.”

Lin tilted his head, replying in a slightly murmuring voice. Then, with a single flick of his hands, the twin handguns he threw away before flew back into his hands. He then fired two shots from each handguns, the bullets piercing through Sipua and Hydelcyon’s knee and forcing them to kneel.

“It’s time to be punished, damned bastards.”

Scizarnath is the god whose name Hydelcyon has.

Chapter 239. Guardian (9)

Everything had gone terribly. The barely surviving Resistance Army had great losses, and Sipua had turned against the dungeon and tried to kill me, Lin, and the others from the dungeon who had come to take her back. Hydelcyon had destroyed the magic circle maintaining the underground base knowing that it would kill the people who he once tried to protect. He was trash beyond my imagination.

I had imagined things would go this way. That Sipua would join the side of the world's enemy!

Of course, it made sense. In exchange for her and Lodert Hydelcyon's safety, she must have promised the Book Walkers a Hero's power. She must have used me as a bargaining chip as well as others who would come to this empire.

Would the Book Walkers have declined? Would they have captured Sipua instead? Of course not! If they used her as bait, appetizing prey would walk in by themselves! They were undoubtedly satisfied with Sipua's offer. Although no one knew whether their alliance would last after the prey had all been eaten, their current relationship would have been solid.

However, leaving the dungeon to find her love was different from cooperating with a world's enemy to protect her love. Even if it made sense to do so, neither me, Daisy, nor Lin thought that Sipua, as an administrative guild master, would have joined hands with the world's enemy. Even if she resisted us, we thought it would be between us and her. The thought of involving a world's

enemy had been just too absurd!

We could only think that she might have prepared traps using the Resistance Army or the underground terrain. I felt especially suspicious when Daisy read Hydelcyon's thoughts.

Daisy's report that was completely contrary to his attitude, and the strange sensation when I kicked him made me even more cautious. When I asked Lin out for a drink, it was in order to talk to him about this.

Of course, Lin may have had a hidden life line that I didn't know about. But in any case, Lin was someone who had received a share of the dungeon's power, an administrative guild member who had given himself for the benefit of explorers. For this reason, I thought to prepare myself for when he fell in danger. What I then explained to him was the power of Caduceus, the power of the white snake.

The white snake's power was the opposite of the black snake's. In other words, it had the power of healing. Its effect was simple, yet powerful. As expected, however, tricky conditions had to be met in order to use it.

[When used within 10 seconds of an ally's death, you use half of your health to completely revive your ally and boost his ability by 50% for 1 minute.]

The 10 second period was indescribably cruel. However, as long as I was close enough to witness an ally's moment of death, I was

able to revive him. A power to undo death, it was truly worthy of being called a god's power. The fact that I earned Hermes' power was certainly a great fortune.

One of the main reasons for my grief at the succubi's deaths in the Philippines was that I couldn't activate Caduceus as I wasn't next to them. That said, even if I did, deciding on who to save would have been difficult as well. Not to mention, I wouldn't have been able to carry out today's plan.

The reason Lin never used his sniper rifle was also for the world's enemy. Though, he never would have thought the world's enemy would appear with Sipua.

According to him, the only ones who knew about his sniper rifle was Loretta, Loka, and a few others. In other words, it was the perfect secret weapon. Naturally, compared to his handguns, the sniper rifle had a greater concentration of his power and authority.

A secret was more powerful the more hidden it was, especially in this continent. Lin concealed his secret weapon perfectly and revealed it in the perfect moment when no one was expecting it. While fighting the world's enemy, he made his opponent miscalculate his strength and led him to let his guard down.

However, even if one knew he would be revived, would he be able to include his death in his battle plan? Today was the first time I experienced Lin's true power. He wasn't only physically powerful. He was equally as powerful mentally.

In any case, I revived him just as we planned and immediately activated Overlord to conceal his aura with mine. Lin snorted at my doubt over his stealth ability, but everything had to be perfect. When Daisy reactivated the darkness magic at that timing, the reason I cheered was that I had gotten certain that my plan would succeed.

From then, I continued to grab the world's enemy's attention and restrained him to aid Lin's sniping. Although I acted as if I was fine, I was secretly trembling at his fierce resistance.

Thankfully, Lin assassinated the world's enemy before it was too late. Now, only the two great sinners were left in front of us.

“You probably don't need us to explain what you did wrong, right?”

“Lin, please don't kill us!”

“Kuuuk...!”

Despite Lin's cold tone, Sipua shamelessly beseeched him. Hydelcyon, on the other hand, was writhing in pain next to her, holding his pierced knee.

“Not kill you? That's all you want?”

“That's...”

“Think back to what I said yesterday. I gave you two the chance to go back to where you belonged. Did I say I’d kill either of you? ... And look at what you did today. This trash sacrificed his allies, who saved him when he was kicked out of the dungeon, to kill Kang Shin and me, and you sold us to the world’s enemy!”

Lin fired his gun again. This time, he hit Hydelcyon’s left arm.

“Kuuuaaak!”

“L-Lodert! Oh, Lodert, no! Lin, please, shoot me instead! Don’t shoot Lodert!”

“Don’t worry, I’ll shoot you too.”

Lin retorted without batting an eye and really shot Sipua’s left arm. Sipua didn’t even groan in response, only glaring at Lin.

“I normally hate bullying others to vent my anger. My style is to kill those who deserve death without dragging it out. But this damned...”

He couldn’t hold his anger back, cutting himself off and aiming his gun at Hydelcyon again. After his gun flashed twice, two holes appeared on Hydelcyon’s right ear and right arm. His shriek filled the air.

“This damned bastard is already marked by someone else. Ah, you’re here?”

“Un, just came.”

In the darkness, Daisy appeared. I could clearly see Hydelcyon’s trembling body. Was it because I was using Overlord? The darkness magic could no longer block my vision.

“Daisy Ectradion...”

“72 alive.”

“You, how did you get so strong!?”

“There were 389. Now, only 72 are alive.”

As always, Daisy sounded calm. She was calmly boiling with rage.

“Last pride, as an explorer, you threw away, for your greed.”

Daisy’s inventory opened. Seeing hundreds of undeads crawling out of it, I felt stifled. They were undead... humans. This was the first time I had seen Daisy wield human undeads. That said, for someone who could turn monsters into the undead, being able to turn humans into undeads was obvious. Furthermore, those undeads...

Daisy continued, widening her deep scarlet eyes fiercely.

“By the ones you’ve killed, die.”

“No, you can’t kill Lodert!”

“No, that trash will certainly die.”

Lin rolled his foot lightly. In an instant, a wall of fire shot up around Sipua. The magic she was trying to cast was canceled. The blazing heat made it hard even for me to breathe. Separated from Sipua, Hydelcyon shot back as he screamed crazily.

“Laughable! You think some zombies will be able to kill me!? Sipua, Sipua! Hey, Sipua! I’m about to die! Sipua!”

“Lodert, oh Lodert! Lin, please! Please save him, I’ll do anything you say!”

“You will? Sorry, I can’t trust you anymore.”

Lin bit down on his cigarette. Almost as if Lin was the one controlling the zombies, one of the zombies bit off Hydelcyon’s right arm.

“And it’s too late.”

“Kuaaaaaak! It hurts, it hurts!!”

Neither Lin nor I batted an eye as we watched on. As for Daisy, after she ordered her zombies to attack Hydelcyon, she was murmuring in an undecipherable tone.

“I believed you. You were an explorer, so I believed you.”

“Hiiik! No, ugaaak!”

“I shouldn’t have... I shouldn’t have.”

As Hydelcyon’s shrieks got louder, Sipua’s screams also got louder.

“No! Lin, please! No!”

“What made you like this? What made you join hands with the world’s enemy who you hated so much!? What made you force me to experience something so dirty!”

“Kuaaaaaak!”

As more pieces of Hydelcyon’s flesh were bitten off by the zombies, he was getting smaller. His eyes, holding onto a tiny sliver of life, were getting dimmer. Sipua’s screamed in despair, but Lin wasn’t moved in the slightest.

“For these countless years, I respected you and treated you as an ally and friend. And you made me a fool! We had gathered for the sole purpose of protecting countless worlds, and you spat on our will!”

“Save Lodert!”

“Caduceus’ power has already been used.”

I replied instead of Lin. At that moment, Sipua’s screaming stopped. Hydelcyon had already gone silent a while ago.

“Lodert...?”

“...”

“Lodert... Lodert!”

The wall of fire trapping Sipua disappeared. She shot up and looked around for Hydelcyon. All the zombies gathered in one spot ran back. However, there was nothing there. Not even a single fragment of his armor or a single strand of his hair was left.

“Lod...ert.”

“Dragon Horn, burn them. I want to, let them go.”

“I told you not to call me Dragon Horn... Tsk.”

Fire ignited on the zombies, and in a brief moment, the hundreds of zombies all burned away, not even leaving behind ashes. Seeing that we were the only ones left, Sipua plopped down.

“No... It can't be...”

“I agree. No one will believe what happened here, especially what you have done.”

The worst we had assumed was Sipua laying a trap, not a fight with the world's enemy. One of the five administrative guild masters of the First Dungeon had not only attracted the world's enemy, but had also trapped us by making an Event Dungeon. I still couldn't believe it. When I thought about how Loretta would react when she found out, I couldn't help but sigh.

“Lodert, Lodert...! You killed Lodert, you! There's... no longer any meaning to life... I don't want to live.”

“If the burden you carried was that heavy... If you hated it so much that you would have rather thrown it all away, I'll help you go to rest.”

It seemed he had made his decision. Lin held up his gun and aimed it at Sipua.

“Die, Sipua. From this moment on, I will preserve the dungeon in

your place.”

“Wait, Lin.”

“Uh?”

I looked at Lin. Then, I spoke.

“This punishment would be too light. Just today, hundreds of people lost their lives. Even Lin died once. Even with all this, are you trying to bind yourself to the dungeon for her?”

“... I’m practically bound to the dungeon anyways. Or what, will you take her place? What happened to your will of wanting to rid all worlds of their enemies?”

I halted. At Lin’s words, I felt a deep sense of regret. I of course didn’t think that I was the first to have held this wish.

Right... Lin must have also been threatened by his world’s enemy, and he undoubtedly faced numerous challenges while fighting against them. Then, despite his deep hostility and hatred against them, he chose to become part of the dungeon, throwing away his wishes.

As such, I replied resolutely.

“Let her carry the burden herself. She has to pay the price for her

sins. The only way to do so would be to bind her to the dungeon.”

“You... You’re more cruel and vicious than I thought. But how?”

“The chance of succeeding isn’t high, but I thought I should try it.”

There wasn’t much time before Overlord would end. I could hold on until now because I hadn’t used much of my power, but only 10 or so seconds were left. If I wanted to utilize the stat doubling effect of Overlord, I had to hurry.

It went without saying that charm was one of the stats being amplified. Currently, I was confident that I didn’t lose to anyone in the dungeon in terms of charm. That applied to the Sipua in front of me as well.

I approached her. Her eyes shot towards me with a deadly glare.

“Hero, Hero! Damn you to hell! I will never go back to the dungeon! You will be torn to shreds by the world’s enemy and your world will fall to ruin! Remember this. It. Will. Come. True!”

“Lilith’s Temptation.”

I didn’t have the time to listen to her meaningless babble. There was only a 20% chance of it succeeding. If I failed, Lin would have to become the new administrative guild master.

However, my worry was for naught. Almost as if it was the most natural result, the power that left my body dominated her.

[You used Lilith's Temptation! You stole 50% of the target's health and magic!"]

[The target falls under 'absolute obedience', forever becoming your servant.]

The moment the messages rang out, I saw a bone-chilling scene. Sipua, who had been cursing me out just a moment ago, changed her expression completely. Almost as if she had gained an incredible enlightenment, she looked around and examined her body. Then, she located me in the darkness and spoke as she kowtowed.

"Ah, aaaah... My master... P-Please forgive my impudence! Please don't look at me like that!"

"Kang Shin... You...!"

"Damn... This is why I didn't want to use it."

Someone who had thrown away everything, including herself, for her love had discarded her love as if it was an old pair of shoes. Could the person in front of me be considered Sipua? If someone asked me this question, I could only shake my head.

In a different way than Lin had intended, I had killed her.

“This is... truly a punishment. Kang Shin, you scary bastard.”

“I won’t use this skill ever again. Damn it...”

My gamble succeeded. From now on, she would continue to protect the dungeon as an administrative guild master along with losing the love of her life and obtaining a new love that would never be reciprocated. That was the greatest punishment I could give her.

The moment I put her under my command, a fanfare rang out. Ironically, the voice belonged to Sipua’s.

[Event Dungeon clear! You obtained 10 stat points and 3 skill points!]

Chapter 240. Guardian (10)

Even after I waited for a long time, no other voice rang out. The last time I defeated a world's enemy, the response was much more chaotic. This time, however, made me doubtful that the one we defeated was a real world's enemy. However, the power in my hand was undoubtedly a world's power.

I asked Lin.

“Lin, we defeated a world's enemy... Isn't there anything more?”

“Don't be stupid. Where do rewards come from?”

“Well, it's obviously the dun... Ah!”

The reason we were here was to allow the dungeon to operate normally. Of course there wouldn't be any rewards now! At that moment, Sipua's face shone as she shoved her face towards me.

“Master, if it's stat or skill points, I can give them to you!”

“You shut up, Sipua. Don't waste any more of you power!”

“Don't interrupt me when I'm talking to Master, Lin!”

“Sipua shut it.”

“Yes!”

I was beginning to understand how the dungeon operated. Once Sipua became quiet, Lin looked at her dumbfoundedly and turned his attention towards me.

“Even if Sipua is weak, turning her into this... What are you?”

“I’m wondering the same thing.”

“... Serves her right.”

Daisy glared at Sipua with disdain as she approached me.

“Thanks, Kang Shin. Promise, you already kept.”

“I’m not the one who killed the world’s enemy. It was Lin. If you want to thank someone, thank him.”

“Dragon Horn, good job.”

“Why are you thanking him sincerely and treating me like a pet dog!?”

I’ve been thinking this for a while, but could Daisy really be thinking of Lin as an animal...? Maybe she just liked his horn. It

seemed I needed to warn Lin to be wary of his horn being cut off while he's asleep.

“Found hope... Though, before those weaklings grow, it'll take some time.”

“Sorry. So many people died because of us...”

“It's not Kang Shin's fault. No one expected it... It's my fault for, believing in a human too much.”

With that, she seemed to ponder momentarily before she shook her head and spoke.

“But Kang Shin is different. I trust Kang Shin.”

“Yeah, thanks.”

“Don't have the brains, to trick people...”

“That's too harsh! At the very least, I'm not stupid!”

Daisy said she was just joking and laughed lightly.

“Kang Shin likes me, so you don't try to trick me.”

“I'm not sure what you mean by 'like'... You know that I didn't

mean what I said before, right?”

“Kang Shin hiding his embarrassment, annoying but slightly cute.”

“So you really want to leave it as a misunderstanding, huh?”

I told myself to lecture her later. For now, there was something else I needed to do. I held the white sphere of light on my palm towards her.

“It’s time to keep my other promise. Daisy, I’m going to make you a Hero. Are you prepared?”

“From the moment 90 years ago, when I was chosen as a Hero candidate, I was ready.”

“I already knew this, but you’re old, Grandma Dai— Kahak!”

I almost absorbed the world’s power accidentally. Daisy waved her foot near my shin as she glared at me.

“I’m a maiden in her prime. Apologize for your rude remark.”

“Sorry...”

First, I made Daisy into a Hero on the spot. Watching this

happen, Lin made a bitter smile.

“You’re pretty skilled at handling that power. Wielding a foreign world’s power so easily and bestowing it to someone safely, it’s almost like I’m watching the Savior Hero...”

“Savior Hero?”

“Let’s go back. We can’t let the dungeon stay like it is any longer.”

Savior Hero, that was one of my titles. Did Lin know something about it? Lin didn’t seem to want to say anything as he turned back silently.

In the dark and silent underground base, the only ones left were me, Lin, Daisy, Sipua, and the headless corpse of the world’s... Hey!

“Good undead material... Good rival for Laki.”

“Hey!”

“Very, very good material.”

“Even so, that was your world’s enemy... Do you really want to make control someone like him?”

When I asked dumbfoundedly, Daisy looked at me like I was crazy.

“Corpses... have no sins. All corpses are good corpses.”

“Don’t say that like it’s some profound truth!”

With that, the search for Sipua ended and everyone deployed to the Sylon continent returned to the dungeon. Although short, the event remained an unforgettable memory.

For helping to find Sipua, Revival became an A ranked guild, and Daisy and I both received a top-class accessory each to make up for the reward we missed out in defeating the world’s enemy. The dungeon’s power for defeating the world’s enemy and the power for bringing Sipua back would both be included.

“Why do I have to make them when I worked my ass off too!?”

“That’s obviously because you didn’t bring Sipua back immediately after you found her! Because you showed mercy to Sipua, do you know how many worlds were placed in danger!? Two of them almost fell!”

Furthermore, it was the first time I had seen Loretta this angry.

“The moment Sipua left the dungeon, she became our enemy! She was our ally for 2,500 years!? You pitied her!? She trampled on all these years we spent together! Lin, how can you do something

so stupid!?”

“N-No, Noonim... You see...”

“And that even led you to fight a world’s enemy!? It thankfully worked out well, but what if something happened to Shin-nim!? Tell me!”

Loretta was so scary that I wanted to run away. However, I couldn’t escape as Loretta was hugging me tightly. Kuk, at the same time her fragrance and touch led me to heaven, my breath... my breath...!

“If I could, Lin, with my own hands...!”

“S-Scary! Noonim, your expression is too scary!”

This was the first time I had seen Lin so frightened! I was wondering what kind of expression Loretta was making... but I felt like I would regret it, so I quietly stayed trapped in her embrace.

“I was so worried... For you too, Lin! How can you be so immature? Didn’t you say you almost died!? What if Loka gets left alone!?”

“No, she has a kid now, so she won’t be alo... Sorry!”

Lin kowtowed. However, Loretta didn’t seem satisfied.

“You should know more than anyone else that you should never let your guard down against any world’s enemy! Even I have to be extremely cautious. I told you multiple times to protect Shin-nim, but you fought the world’s enemy together? You came back feeling proud of that? Hm? You want me to praise you?”

“Kang Shin was actually pretty usefu... Spare me, Noonim!”

“Loretta, I can’t... breathe...”

“O-Oh. Sorry, Shin-nim. I got a little excited...”

I didn’t think anyone else would call it ‘little’, but I closed my mouth. Loretta who had let go of me slightly had embraced me once again from the front.

“I was so worried...! Thank god you’re safe, thank god...”

“I’m sorry for making you worry, Loretta.”

“You came back alive, so it’s fine. If something happened to Shin-nim... I might have put myself in a position where I couldn’t blame Sipua anymore.”

As she said that, Loretta’s expression was strange. Almost as if she had discovered something new, her face was pale. Then, she let me go. While I was feeling dizzy, drunk on her fragrance, Loretta

put her hand on her forehead and sighed as if to spit out something buried deep inside her heart.

“For... For a long time, we maintained the dungeon like this. For a long time... Right, for a very long time. Something like this was bound to happen.”

“Couldn’t it have been prevented somehow?”

“Should all the administrative guild masters be put in a coffin? If we’re sealed with the Lord’s power, we won’t have to worry about something like this happening.”

“Sorry, Loretta. I didn’t mean that.”

Loretta shook her head.

“For us, the power of the dungeon within us can’t be detached unless we die. To maintain the dungeon, we had to stay within it. Unable to bear the stress built up from countless years, two masters had even given up their seats to others...”

“Wait, doesn’t that mean...”

“They killed themselves.”

I stopped breathing. While I was frozen, Loretta continued.

“The weight of the passing time had strangled them. There was simply no stimulant. Things were looking too dangerous, and one by one, we began to receive the positions the Lord’s power used to maintain. That was truly a saving grace. More and more people were beginning to require the dungeon’s power, and no matter how amazing she was, she had her limit. We made contact with the dungeon’s explorers and through them, we found a new life. However, that had its own problem.”

“A problem like what happened this time...”

“Yes. I told you something like this happened before, right? The person who first caused trouble was the administrative guild master of Lost Valley. He had fallen in love with an explorer. To save her and her world, he focused too much of the dungeon’s power to her.”

Lost Valley’s guild master, I had already met that person. And she...

“She became very powerful and succeeded in defeating her world’s enemy. Because of the amount of power given to her, the dungeon had reached a point where it ceased to function. The Lost Valley’s master then attempted to escape to her world to live with her.”

“Loretta, wait...”

“Eleine killed him.”

Loretta continued without pause.

“She returned the dungeon’s power to its normal state and became the new guild master of Lost Valley. A power that could protect her world, she believed that other worlds needed it as well.”

“For that, she killed her lover...”

“Their relationship was more one sided than mutual. Plus, Eleine has a tough spirit, though she may not look like it.”

“She looked like a girl who just liked to play around.”

“That’s not wrong either. Didn’t I tell you? She’s completely into Lin right now, so she’s constantly chasing after him, but in the past, it was much worse. She’s the type of girl who doesn’t fall deep into love. To be honest, Eleine’s personality is the most fit for an administrative guild master.”

Loretta’s main point was what followed.

“After that incident, all administrative guild members including the guild masters began to use puppets instead of their real bodies. Although communicating with explorers was nice, everyone realized that they couldn’t be affected by their encounters too much. Only few became exceptions to this rule. For example, Eladel and Maladel.”

“Even so, nothing could stop Sipua from falling in love.”

“There just couldn’t be a perfect solution... Just like how I, who had only contacted Shin-nim through a puppet, had fallen in love with Shin-nim.”

Loretta sighed once again.

“Harboring feelings for or against explorers isn’t encouraged. With this incident, you can see the ending. Even so, I...”

“Loretta...”

“Please, Shin-nim, always stay the way you are... Shining, as you always are...”

She shook her head and mended her words.

“No, nevermind. Shin-nim should do what Shin-nim wants to do. I won’t pressure Shin-nim anymore, I won’t... That’s the way it should be.”

“...”

“It’s fine if there are other women. I won’t be selfish, so... If you only look for me, I won’t stray from my path. I won’t become like Sipua. It’ll be fine.”

I silently embraced Loretta. With that, Loretta, who was talking nonstop as if she was drunk, became quiet. Lin widened his eyes, Daisy covered her face with her hands, and Sipua shouted something before getting silenced by Daisy's kick.

With a blank expression, Loretta spoke.

“Shin-nim...”

“One day...”

“One day...?”

“No, sorry. It's a secret for now.”

“Then until Shin-nim is ready to say it, I'll wait...”

That day, I set a seemingly unpredictable impossible goal. That was the only solution. Now that I had come to know, I couldn't stop. I could only continue running infinitely.

“Oh, by the way, Loretta... There is something I need to say.”

“Yes?”

“I like Loretta too... I love you.”

That day, I was almost raped in front of Lin. It was scary.

Chapter 241. What Happened Twice Will...

(1)

Lin immediately headed off to work on the rewards. Since the accessories weren't something that he could make in a day or two, Daisy and I had to give up on seeing them for a while.

For the record, although Sipua had committed grave sins of escaping the dungeon and cooperating with a world's enemy, considering the situation, she was simply given a punishment of 500 years in confinement. When she heard the punishment, she looked at me with longing eyes, but I just ignored them. It seemed it would be an effective punishment.

“Let's go back, Daisy.”

“Un... Aren't you reproducing?”

“Am I a bacteria!?”

“Shin-nim, I'll see you in a bit!”

“You, don't ever come...”

We left Fairy Garden and returned to the guild house. The guild members, who had been waiting for us to return, felt relieved when the dungeon started operating again, and asked us what had happened. However, as it was too dark to tell them, I gave an

evasive answer. Not knowing the truth wouldn't hurt them anyways.

“Whew, it's finally over... What's your plan, Daisy?”

“I'm going to, sleep.”

Daisy yawned. Now that she mentioned it, I hadn't slept a wink. Just when I was thinking about going to sleep too, Daisy took off her beret in the middle of the hallway, then threw off her coat. Then, she suddenly tilted her head and asked.

“Sleep together?”

“No! And if you're going to undress any more, do it in your room!”

“You wanted to sleep...”

“But not with you!”

“... Are you going to sleep, with that elf queen?”

“Don't say that even if you're joking! Do you know how scared I was!? I'm going to sleep alone, a.l.o.n.e.!”

Although I was exhausted, this whole incident had only taken a

day's worth of time. Other than the fact that Revival had become an A ranked guild, nothing had changed from the day before. Earth was still peaceful, and neither the four remaining kings nor the demon race had appeared.

Since I didn't want to go back to the dungeon and fight, I decided to just sleep.

I had used Overlord and Hermes' power... It seemed my body was waiting for a rest after a severe physical labor. After I took a shower, I went to my room in the guild house and fell on my bed like someone who had just finished a marathon. Then, I fell asleep. It felt warm.

When I woke up, Ina was sleeping next to me.

“... Eh?”

When I sat up, Ina mumbled softly. I patted her and kept her sleeping. But why was Ina in my room? I didn't need to think for long as I could clearly see the door I had left wide open.

“Thank god it's Ina...”

I murmured instinctively and trembled. It seemed the trauma wouldn't go away for a while. I got down from the bed and got changed. I looked at the clock. It seemed I had been sleeping for 15 hours straight. Considering the fact that I usually only needed 3 hours of sleep, it was a surprising amount.

“Mm, I might as well go to the dungeon now.”

That was the only way I knew how to spend my free time! Despairing at my battle-ridden lifestyle, I left the room. When I closed the door silently so that Ina could sleep peacefully, Daisy was standing in the hallway.

“Whoa!”

Daisy stared at me fixedly.

“You said you would, sleep alone. But you slept, with another woman.”

“Ina’s my daughter!”

“... Will the daughter, also think that?”

“Of course!”

Since Daisy was the one saying it, I couldn’t help but worry slightly... No, she was just trying to tease me! As if to prove that this was the case, the corner of Daisy’s mouth curled up.

“Kidding. I didn’t read, her thoughts.”

“If possible, don’t make jokes that are going to give me heart attacks...”

“There is something, I want to say.”

I noticed that Daisy was wearing her formal battle attire which she took off when she went to bed. When she wasn’t going out for battle, she usually wore loose clothes that made the guild’s male members glance at her, so her current attire somewhat stood out.

“You kept your promise, very quickly. So from now on, I will work, for Kang Shin. I will pay back, this gratitude.”

“That’s it...? You did your best ever since you entered the guild. Like you did in the Philippines, for example.”

However, Daisy shook her head and spoke.

“What Kang Shin is doing, I want to do it too.”

“... Hm?”

“What Kang Shin plans on doing, I will do as well.”

“Ah.”

I barely understood what she was trying to say. She had seen

through my plan.

“Your goal, I like it. So let’s do it, together.”

“I’m the one who came up with it... But it’s going to take a long time.”

“Un. Let’s do it, together.”

“As you know, the motive isn’t pure either...”

I scratched my head, and Daisy tilted her head in response.

“Motive doesn’t matter. Let’s do it, together.”

“I don’t really understand you... but for now, let’s focus on Earth. We have plenty of time to talk about this.”

“Un. I just wanted to, say it early. I wanted to become, your first ally.”

With that, Daisy smiled lightly. Her waning eyes looked beautiful and her smile also brought a smile on my face. I felt like I had obtained an unexpected, but reliable friend.

“So, do we sleep together, now?”

“No!”

“You sleep with your daughter, but not your ally?”

“You just wanted to tease me, right!?”

After that, I chased away Daisy who started taking her clothes off to go to bed, then returned to Earth. Now that I thought about it, I had to face Beyond’s 20th Floor Master now. Since it hasn’t been a day since I used Overlord, I was a bit hesitant to fight him. Just thinking about a monster that was a mix of Dullahans and Grim Reapers made my stomach churn.

In addition, I realized that I had not seen my family since I came back from the Sylon continent. Mother was complaining recently about never being able to see her son’s face, so I planned on using this opportunity to show my face more.

“Ah, Shin...”

“Ludia.”

The first one I met after coming home was Ludia. The scene of her in her white priestess robe vacuuming the floor was a bit ironic. The fact that she looked so used to it was also a bit sad.

“I thought you were going to come back home immediately. Did you end up going to the dungeon?”

“No, I just crashed in the guild house.”

“After making me worry to death, really...”

“Sorry.”

I didn't try to make any excuses. Ludia snorted at my honest apology and went back to vacuuming the floor. As she moved the vacuum cleaner forward and backward with as much skill as my mother, she murmured in a voice that barely went through the vacuum noise.

“It's fine as long as you're safe...”

“Thanks for worrying about me.”

“That's all I can do for you, always.”

Her voice carried a self-deprecating tone.

“Ever since I met you, there hasn't been a day I haven't thought about you. You're really annoying.”

“You were annoying too when we first...”

I quickly dodged a vacuum cleaner swinging at my face. Ludia

spoke as she glared.

“How you hate losing an inch annoys me too.”

“I’m just saying what’s right... No, sorry.”

Ludia, who was preparing for a secondary attack, widened her eyes when I apologized. Then, she laughed and went back to vacuuming. She seemed to be finishing up, but it seemed she had more to say.

“I keep thinking about it recently... I’ve gotten calmer now, and I’ve got the ease of mind to look back.”

“That’s... good.”

At first, she didn’t want to even move if I wasn’t around. Now, however, it was fine even if I wasn’t around her for several days, and she didn’t even look for me as she climbed the dungeon with Shuna all day. It was a true improvement. It’s been a month since she last crawled onto my bed as well.

“Like when I first met you, when we reunited... or when you killed Shina.”

“... Ludia.”

It was very rare for Ludia to talk about that incident. Before I

noticed, the vacuum cleaner was turned off.

“It must have been because I was overwhelmed with so many emotions. I didn’t know what the emotions I was feeling were. At that time, I thought I was working for revenge... but it seems that wasn’t it.”

“It wasn’t?”

“... I imagined myself on the other side. What I would have done if it was you who died, not Shina. Then, the answer was simple.”

Ludia returned the vacuum cleaner where it belonged. It seemed we were the only ones in the house as it was completely silent.

“How I behaved back then... must have been a desperate evasion.”

I felt like I understood. Seeing her sorrow expression, that was the only thing I could do.

“I was relieved that you didn’t die. Even when my younger sister died... I was relieved that it was Shina who died, not you. If it was the other way around, I would have killed Shina with my own hands, regardless of whether she was the Demon Lord’s spy or not.”

“Ludia, you can stop there.’

“I couldn’t forgive myself for how I felt back then. I didn’t want to admit it. That’s why. Even though the answer was so simple...”

She sighed and continued.

“Shin, back then... No, maybe even before, I must have been in love with you. You must have been more important to me than anything else.”

“Uk...”

As I had just experienced a potentially catastrophic incident that stemmed from love, Ludia’s confession didn’t feel so light. While I was hesitating to say anything, Ludia made a ligh smile.

“I don’t need a reply. I already know you don’t love me back.”

“Ludia...”

“I said I don’t need a reply. Do you need to reject me thoroughly to be satisfied?”

Ah, her usual way of talking was back. Seeing her frown, I swallowed my words.

“So the promise is null. It was just me being stubborn anyways, you don’t need to take responsibility for me forever.”

“But—”

“I said don’t reply, you orc.”

Ludia’s hand slapped my arm. Then, she gently held my arm. A smile had returned to her face.

“You can stay just the way you are. I’ll love you on my own and chase you on my own.”

“It’ll be painful for you.”

“It won’t be, stupid. Being able to stay with someone you love is a blessing in itself... Even if that person is in love with someone else.”

She let go of my arm, then put her hands on my shoulders. She fixed her sapphire-like blue eyes onto me and spoke as if to engrave her words on my mind.

“I don’t plan on ever letting go of this love. It might be burdensome and awkward, but just let me be. Being loved by a persistent girl like me is your misfortune, so... continue taking care of me from now.”

I had the feeling things would be exactly like how she described it. That I would be with her forever. I had no way of distancing

myself away from her. Could Loretta do it? No, I was certain Loretta couldn't, and neither could Hwaya, Ye-Eun, or anyone else.

The day I came to know my love, I obtained a life-long ally and a lovable burden that would follow me eternally.

Chapter 242. What Happened Twice Will...

(2)

“Good morning, Oppa.”

The next morning, after sleeping with a nice break from the dungeon, I came face to face with a strange scene. Yua was, of course, as angelic as always, but the problem was...

“What are you holding?”

“It’s the egg, Oppa!”

A large ruby-like egg was sitting in Yua’s embrace, glowing with a red light. I asked just to be sure, but it really was an egg. Yua stroked the egg gently as she spoke.

“If I hold it like this, the baby will hatch earlier, hehe.”

“Er, mmm, good luck...?”

“Yes!”

I didn’t know whether Yua’s nesting would work, but it probably didn’t matter with how cute she looked. However, looking at her with an egg reminded me of the metallic egg Ruyue was caring for in the Fairy Garden. As I headed to the dungeon, I summoned Ruyue and asked.

“Did that egg hatch yet?”

[No, it's still sleeping. I think it's waiting for Shin to get stronger!]

“Quite cheeky for an egg...”

By getting stronger, she probably meant my elemental related skills. A connection of sort had already been established between me and the egg, and it undoubtedly knew I couldn't command a fourth elemental. It was truly cheeky. I wondered how amazing it would be.

“I'll find out naturally when my skills level up. Ruyue, we're going to go fight a strong one today.”

[Un!]

To be honest, I wasn't really worried. There wouldn't be any Floor Masters for a while that I wouldn't be able to defeat with Overlord. Now, I had my sights higher and farther. Breaking through the highest floor in the dungeon, which no one is said to have done, and conquering all of Beyond. These goals weren't enough anymore. I needed to grow past what the dungeon could give me.

[It's been a long time since anyone has come here. You're the third challenger since I've been trapped in this prison.]

“Third? You’re...”

Both Dullahans and Grim Reapers only knew how to charge at me like idiots, so I expected Beyond’s 20th Floor Master to be the same. However, the voice was calm, and the scythe in his hand wasn’t as big as the reapers’ scythes. It seemed he had more characteristics of the reapers as his head wasn’t detached like Dullahans either.

Only, unlike the reapers who were clad with rags, he was wearing a thick armor, and was riding on a chariot tied to headless horses.

[I won’t reveal the names of the defeated, as they’re only numbers to me. Hero, hold up your sword and spear. I am the one who tests, one who eternally dies, a collector of false deaths. All who faced me here have experienced more than one death. Will you be able to defeat me?]

He raised his head. He had Long hair and a pale yet beautiful face. That face did not belong to a ‘he’! I was slightly shaken by the unexpected discovery, but I soon calmed down and asked.

“Are you a woman?”

[Indeed. Although I’ve fallen to a lowly status where I cannot die, I am certainly a woman. But if this causes Hero’s spear edge to become dull, I will be severely disappointed.]

“Do I look like it would ?”

[I am glad that you don't.]

She took a stance on her chariot. The headless horses neighed and began to prepare themselves to charge forward. I could instantly see the force that they would carry in their charge. I grinned and shouted as I fully released my charm.

“Lilith's Temptation!”

It had only been a day since I declared that I would never use it, but I knew when to use my advantage!

[You used Lilith's Temptation! You steal 50% of your target's health and magic power!]

[The target falls under 'awakened one's rage' status effect. In exchange for 50% of her current health, she doubles all her abilities!]

[Kuaaaaa! You dare insult me with this pitiful technique!]

[The Elder Reaper's rage skyrockets, activating 'Curse of the Reaper'! For 5 minutes, the chance of receiving a critical hit from the Elder Reaper is multiplied by 10 times! The Elder Reaper's attack power and speed will increase the more she attacks!]

To think awakened one's rage would activate! The Elder Reaper halted from shock the moment she was struck by Lilith's Temptation, and soon howled in rage as she raised her scythe. My armor already made it easier for me to receive critical hits, but having it multiplied by ten times? Every hit would practically be a critical hit! Really, nothing was easy!

[You'll pay for this! I will reap your life!]

An enormous amount of mana became concentrated on the scythe, creating an ominous grey aura above the scythe. As expected of Beyond's 20th Floor Master, my body tensed up in response to the powerful aura.

"I only used my skill!"

I used Divine Speed and shot up to the sky. At the same time, Sharana's power within me surged up and accelerated me further. The dozens of aura blades she shot out blew past me and exploded with a thunderous roar when they hit the ceiling.

This was only the beginning. The headless horses were stomping on air and charging towards me! The chariot was flying!

[If you're a Hero, fight me with your strength!]

"Strength? Sure!"

Indeed, the Elder Reaper's speed and strength were both

terrifying. With all her abilities doubled and her special skill used, the force of her spirit was overwhelming.

However, she currently only had half of her mana and a fourth of her health! She was a glass cannon. In that case, things were simple. I just had to hit her before she hit me!

“Kuaaaaang!”

[You used Frozen Roar! All enemies in the battlefield freezes in place. All allies temporarily become super-armored and has all abilities increased by 50%. Your chance of landing a critical hit doubles when fighting enemies affected by Frozen Roar.]

[Kuuk!?!]

Although Frozen Roar didn't show its full effect against all the powerful enemies I've fought recently, it was originally a terrifying skill that froze all enemies in place! As it couldn't even freeze the Dragon Zombie on the 15th floor, there was no way it could freeze the Elder Reaper.

However, it could still thoroughly freeze the chariot and the headless horses!

[All you have are petty tricks!]

“Powerful abilities you mean!”

The chariot fell effortlessly. The Elder Reaper jumped out of the chariot without hesitation, while I was already charging towards her after using Overlord. Enveloped by Enigma, I used Divine Speed. To her, I probably looked like a beam of black light.

The Elder Reaper realized my position only after I appeared in front her. She quickly raised her scythe, but I was already thrusting my spear towards her.

[Kuk, coward! And that power!]

“If there’s one thing I’ve learned from all the fights I’ve experienced, it’s that winning trumps all!”

[Kuhuk!]

The Chaotic Spear penetrated her breastplate. Heroic Strike empowered by Enigma had easily ignored the armor’s defensive power. As I said before, she was only left with a fourth of her health. Although she didn’t instantly die, she was left on the brink of death, most likely with less than 5% of her health left.

[Kuuk, so easily... Even if I’m destined to forever be harassed, I will not make way for someone who humiliates women!]

“I never said you should. I’ll find it and walk through it myself!”

She told me to fight her without paying attention to her sex, but she was saying I humiliated her just because I used a skill. How absurd was that? I was even hurt by her words!

I used Divine Speed once again and roughly pulled out the spear from her body. With Overlord active, I didn't need to worry about mana. Perhaps thanks to having her abilities doubled, she barely responded to my movements and shot a grey aura blade towards me.

[I will steal a month from you! I will see you afterwards!]

“Sorry, but I'm going to have to decline your offer for a date!”

Powerful aura could damage the surroundings without ever making contact. With Divine Speed, I shot back and enlarged the Chaotic Spear's length and thickness to penetrate her body once more.

[Kahaak! You bastard!]

“Let's end this!”

[I'll end you, Hero!]

In that instant, the Elder Reaper's aura exploded from all sides. Her aura contained in her scythe was shrinking rapidly and teleporting to random places to explode!

I didn't think such a refined aura technique could exist and gawked at the scene. Soon, I realized that it wasn't the time to admire her skill, as my HP was falling even as I was being protected by Enigma.

[Kuuuuk! You think I will kneel!?!]

“Elemental Blade!”

A layer made of elementals was added to the spear blade. In an instant, the hole in the Elder Reaper's body became bigger. In the next moment, the Elder Reaper dropped her head with widened eyes.

[I-Impossible...!]

The spear I was holding suddenly lost its weight. The Elder Reaper's body was scattering into particles of light.

[Amazing! You are the first in Beyond's history to succeed in soloing the Elder Reaper on your first try! You obtained 3 skill point as reward. Remaining skill points: 39]

[You obtained the title, 'Elder Reaper Master.' All stats increase by 2. This effect will apply even if the title is not equipped.]

[You cleared Beyond's 20th floor. You obtained the qualification

to challenge the dungeon's 71st floor.]

[Your maximum HP and MP increase by 2%. You obtained 5 bonus stats.]

[Experience has been added to skills you frequently used to progress through Beyond's 20th floor.]

[You received the only reward left hidden for the First Explorer. Congratulations! Your luck stat increases by 10.]

[Secret. Shadow-Hidden Blade (Epic)]

“That was easy... too easy.”

Although I defeated her easily, the Elder Reaper was undoubtedly powerful. The chariot driven by the headless horses were extremely quick (though I got rid of them with Frozen Roar), the Curse of the Reaper sent chills down my back (though I was never hit by the Elder Reaper), and her instant acceleration and terrifying aura couldn't be described with words. If it wasn't for Lilith's Temptation, it might have been difficult to subdue her even with Overlord.

However, in the end, she was a woman and I was a man, a weak man. My vow to never use Lilith's Temptation again had been broken so quickly...

“People say what happened twice will happen thrice... Damn,

from now on, I'll only use it on enemies that I know I will kill!"

With that meaningless vow, I deactivated Overlord. Immediately afterwards...

[Congratulations! You obtained the god of destruction Shiva's true name!]

What happened twice in the past had happened a third time.

Chapter 243. What Happened Twice Will...

(3)

[Your strength, constitution, and magic increases by 20%. All stats increase by 5. Your affinity to all elements increases, and your affinity to the light element increases greatly. Your resistance to poison increases greatly.]

[Once per day, you can summon Shiva's trident, 'Trishula', for 30 minutes. The summoned Trishula will become infused into your weapon and will increase your spear technique's rank by one level. When attacking, you have a 10% chance of attacking the enemy thrice, dealing 3 times the normal damage.]

[Once per month, you can summon Shiva's [gana](#), 'Nandi', for 5 minutes. Nandi is a giant bull, and will go berserk upon summoning without caring for its body. It possesses power befitting of a gana of the Destruction God, charging forward with the sole purpose of destroying your target.]

[Once per year, you can use 'Eye of the Destruction God.' A third eye said to exist on Shiva's forehead opens, shooting a powerful beam of light forward. As it flies in the speed of light, it is said to be unavoidable and said to be able to destroy anything. Its attack power increases based on your stats.]

[You obtained three gods' true names with the body of a human! This is a miraculous event never before seen in the history of the dungeon. Although there are countless other gods who wish to bestow their names to you, it is extremely difficult to carry four gods' true names with the body of a human. However, if you

advance from your current realm, it might be possible to obtain a fourth god's true name!]

Although I thought I had gotten stronger, the shock I received this time was enormous. When I obtained Hermes' true name, my speed had increased by 15%, and when I obtained Zeus' true name, my strength and charm had increased by 15%. This time, however, my strength, constitution, and magic had all increased by 20%! Without decreasing other stats!

15% to 30%, 30% to 60%. Rather than the shock from the doubled percentages, the shock from the change in strength, constitution, and magic had greater impact on my body. It was so great that my body, which had conquered 20 Beyond Floors and was at level 71, felt like it was breaking.

The pain couldn't even be compared to when I obtained Zeus' true name. A boundless divine power was surging through my entire body, amplifying my mana and strengthening my muscles and bones. My body was evolving to become more god-like. I gritted my teeth to not fall unconscious.

“Damn it... I don't even get a choice of gods' true names this time...!?”

Even Zeus and Thor had offered their names together. It seemed the strongest deity in Hinduism didn't want to be compared with another god and put in a place where he had to wait for my decision. His method of bestowing his true name was too violent.

For 10 minutes, I writhed in pain as I endured the transformation my body was undergoing. When I got up after the pain subsided, I could feel the change. When I checked my status, my HP had gone past 100,000 and my MP had gone past 180,000. 180,000! The amount of mana flowing through my body had become this monstrous!

“Mmm...”

However, the world’s enemy I faced in the Sylon continent had even mightier mana. Not just mana, but his pure physical abilities had surpassed every bit of my imagination. Even if I had gotten stronger, there could be others who were stronger. There was no guarantee that the unknown world’s enemy Earth was facing was weaker than the Book Walker’s leader, and the Demon Lord was undoubtedly stronger. Even with a third god’s true name, I wasn’t confident in being able to take the Demon Lord’s life.

Of course, that didn’t mean that I was weak. It was just that the target of comparison was bad. If I utilized the power I obtained this time well, I could probably fight evenly with a world’s enemy on the Lava King’s level.

Trishula, which raised my spear technique rank and increased my attack power, was perfect for me, and although it could only be used once per month, Nandi was also a wide area weapon with immense destructive power.

Finally, there was Shiva’s third eye, which could destroy anything. Since it could only be used one per year, its destructive power was guaranteed. Even the Demon Lord wouldn’t be able to

ignore this attack. Thinking about all these, I felt full of spirit. With this, I had obtained another potent way of attacking!

“Good. I can still become much stronger!”

I had only just cleared the 70th floor. Including Beyond and the First Dungeon, there were still 60 floors to go. I could definitely grow stronger by several times.

“The reward...”

The message window kept bugging me to pick my reward. I only had one choice, so I didn’t know why it wouldn’t just give it to me! I picked the Shadow-Hidden Blade as I grumbled. I expected it to be a weapon, but it was unexpectedly an earring.

[Shadow-Hidden Blade (Epic)

Durability – 850/850

Equipment Requirement – Elder Reaper’s Master, Strength 300+, Magic 300+

Option – Strength +30, Magic +30. When you attack or are attacked, and the attack lands as a critical hit, a large reaper’s scythe appears and attacks the enemy. The attack power of the reaper’s scythe increases based on your strength and magic stats.]

“Ah, this is...!”

The item description was short, but the effect was nothing to scoff at. The fact that it also activated when I was hit by a critical hit was a great advantage. Although I would need to use it once to make solid judgment, the word ‘reaper’s scythe’ was strangely enticing.

After thinking about my choices for a long time, I took off the Blood Succubus’ Earring and put on the Shadow-Hidden Blade. The dark red color of the Blood Succubus’s Earring looked good with the Golden Teardrop which had a beautiful golden gem, but the Shadow-Hidden Blade’s black metallic was more masculine and didn’t go well with the Golden Teardrop.

Looking at my face reflected on my spear blade, I hesitated. Was this okay?

“Well, it’s my stats that matter the most, let’s ignore this. It feels like I’m emitting less scent too.”

Blood Succubus’ Earring had an effect of amplifying my charm and emitting a scent that made it easier for the opposite sex to like me. Although the Blood Succubus’ Earring’s effect became unnoticeable with my overly high charm, I still felt like taking the earring off made the scent diminish. I was certain.

As I stepped out to the Floor Shop, I decided to give the Blood Succubus’ Earring to Yua, who regularly utilized the charm stat. When Loretta saw me, she flinched.

“Ah! Did Shin-nim obtain another true name!?”

“Yep, it was Shiva’s.”

“Shiva... The Destruction God!? Shin-nim’s body could contain Shiva’s power? I was just thinking how Shin-nim’s body seemed different... I’ll have to examine it.”

With a surprised face, Loretta was feeling my body here and there...

“I can clearly see your other thoughts.”

“I’m just trying to check whether something’s wrong with Shin-nim’s body...”

“Eit.”

When I forcefully dragged Loretta off, she pouted and grumbled. I ignored her complaints and asked.

“So, is anything off?”

“Yes? ... Ah.”

“... You completely forgot about it with your evil intentions...”

“Uhu.”

“Don’t think smiling cutely will change anything.”

Next, Loretta thoroughly checked my body without any ulterior motives. She then told me that my body was tense with a third god’s power clashing with the first two gods’ powers. I’d been thinking the same thing.

“So make sure you rest!”

“Do I really need to? The 71st floor won’t be hard.”

“Accepting three gods’ powers in one body is already shocking. Before they can find their balance, Shin-nim needs to rest. If possible, don’t use their powers and rest thoroughly.”

“But I already got ample rest from yesterday. Do I have to rest more?”

When I asked with a sigh, Loretta clapped and shoved her face towards me. Her golden pupils were staring at me fixedly.

“In that case, play with me! I want to treat Shin-nim to something! Let’s go to Fairy Garden together, hurry!”

“No, Loretta’s eyes look too dangerous.”

“I have no evil intentions, really! Not even a bit!”

I would rather believe my mother's words that she'd return the New Year's pocket money I entrusted her with than believe Loretta's words with her beast-like eyes.

“I'll be back, Loretta.”

“Ah, aaaaah! Shin-nim, Shin-niiiiim!”

I waved my hand at Loretta who desperately cried out my name, and came out to Earth. I certainly felt a bit off from the shock of receiving Shiva's true name, and I could somewhat feel the uncontrollable powers clashing against each other within my body. However, ever since I learned mana, I had a cure-all way for when the state of my body was weird. It was Peruta Circuit.

Yua had gone to school, Father and Ludia were in the dungeon, and Mother had gone to work. As a result, I found myself alone at home. In the serene stillness, I began to circulate Peruta Circuit.

I gathered the roiling mana in one place and forcefully pulled the stubborn powers with Peruta Circuit's rotational power. Once incorporated into Peruta Circuit's flow, the circulation speed accelerated. Pulling outside mana into my body while controlling the mana within me, I refined my mana with endless circulations.

“Gods' powers are really hard to control... No, focus, focus.”

To become more used to a god's true name and to better draw forth its power, one needed to identify and wield divine power. I recognized Hermes' power, Zeus' power, and Shiva's power as separate entities, and worked to control them.

To fight against worlds' enemies, I needed to be able to wield powers outside the dungeon's system. It was easy to overlook the fact that gods' true names were also being controlled through the dungeon's power. Although it was nice having a supporter that helped me wield a god's power, in the end, I needed to make the powers I had into my own without relying on the dungeon. Only then could I say that I had the qualification to be a holder of a god's true name.

I heard that even in the past when the dungeon didn't exist, gods bestowed deserving people with their names. Just like how I wielded Peruta Circuit, spear technique, and elemental techniques without the system's help, in the past, gods' true names must have also been given to people as unique abilities.

As such, I needed to be able to use gods' true names like they were my own, not just by shouting skill names. Once I could do that, I would be able to call myself god's true name holder. When that became possible, my league...!

“Mm? Didn't something just flash?”

Just when I thought I had come to grasp something important, my heart thumped. However, no matter how much I tried to recall

my thoughts, I couldn't do so. Since wrenching my head didn't result in a solution, I decided to go back to focusing on Peruta Circuit. No matter the case, it was certain that I was walking towards the right path!

Peruta Circuit had the ability to make one focus. Almost as if I was half-asleep, I circulated Peruta Circuit peacefully. Suddenly, I was ambushed by message noona.

[Event Dungeons have been mass-created on Earth! There are too many dungeons beyond past dungeons' difficulty. Please clear them before it's too late!]

Right.

What happened twice happened thrice. The sudden attack of Event Dungeons also arrived at the most unexpected time!

Chapter 244. What Happened Twice Will...

(4)

I shot up from my cross-legged position. When I woke, it was already five in the afternoon. I had been focusing on Peruta Circuit without moving an inch for the past five hours. That said, focusing on Peruta Circuit seemed to be effective as my body felt much more like my own.

I've gotten somewhat used to all the changes to my stats and the gods' powers have also somewhat calmed down. Even so, they were still roaming around my body unstably. I thought about cornering them somewhere in my body, but for now, they wouldn't budge an inch.

"I'll think about that later..."

I kicked open the door and walked down to the living room. Yua in her school uniform was running into the house.

"Oppa, have you heard!?"

"Yeah. Did you go to school like that!?"

I looked at the red egg in Yua's arms and shouted in shock. Yua smiled and replied.

"Students and teachers both know I'm an ability user. The

teachers allow this much.”

“Well... If Yua’s okay with it, that’s fine.”

“Huhu, I can feel the child moving. It won’t be long before it hatches!”

“Y-Yeah.”

Is it just me or did my younger sister change somewhat after getting her ability...!?

In any case, I headed to the guild house with Father and Ludia who left the dungeon as soon as they heard the message. Everyone besides the guild members outside the country were all gathered in the guild house. A few succubi were stationed in front of the mansion and greeted me when they saw me.

“Dear Husband... Master has arrived!”

“Shin, you were outside? That was quick!”

When I entered the conference room, Hwaya greeted me with widened eyes. Mm, I could tell what she thought of me with those words. With a bitter smile, I asked.

“We haven’t determined the number yet, right?”

“Un. We have the succubi units on it right now. We already reported the situation to each country’s Freedom Wing and Guardian.”

“Dear Husband, the situation seems rough. Just the number we have now is...”

Licorice put her hand on the crystal ball in the middle of the conference room. Immediately, the video projected on the wall changed. On a world map, numerous red dots were being drawn.

“This is what I think it is, right?”

“Yeah, these are all Event Dungeons.”

The succubi’s dungeon search started from Korea. As we were getting live updates from them, the red dots looked like they were spreading from Korea to surrounding countries. In this short period, Korea, China, and Japan had already been completely explored. The number of red dots seemed to easily go past 100...

“How many Event Dungeons did we clear last time...?”

“About 300.”

Hwaya answered. Her expression was also a bit stiff. Even as we were talking, more red dots were being drawn.

“We plan on getting Freedom Wing and Guardian’s help for this time’s investigation and dungeon clear. With the Philippines videos, our approval rating grew to equal Freedom Wing’s and Guardian’s. They won’t be able to decline our request for cooperation.”

“Right, with this many...”

“Un. We have Licorice’s succubi, but even with their strengths taken into account, it might be difficult to clear all these Event Dungeons in time. It’s not like we can split the units further either... We can’t sacrifice more of them.”

“... Right.”

I looked at the world map on the wall and pondered. In the past, Event Dungeons didn’t spawn in the ocean, but this time, there were more red dots in the water than on land. There might be a thousand or even more. Eliminating all these within two months with the power of humanity? It would be impossible without the succubi’s help.

“Thank god Licorice came to me...”

“Good, Dear Husband, I recorded that. We’ll play it repeatedly as a background music for our wedding.”

“I can’t even casually comment on something now!?”

“I thought you’d say that this time, so I was prepared!”

Licorice quickly hid the recorder in her clothes, so I couldn’t even steal it from her. Yua who was standing to my side growled at her threateningly, but she only looked cute.

While I told Licorice off and soothed Yua, Hwaya who was staring at the world map murmured in a serious tone.

“Fast. This is too fast... The gap between the first wave of Event Dungeons and the second wave of Event Dungeons was over a year. This time, it only took four months. If this continues, all of Earth might get covered in Event Dungeons.”

“Earth’s current situation, middle stage of invasion.”

At that moment, Daisy opened her mouth. She was already in her battle uniform. She had come ready to fight.

Her calm and quiet voice rang out in the conference room.

“People of Earth, defended well until now. But the real invasion starts now. It was the same, for my continent. Rather than humanity’s preparation, the invasion was faster.”

“You were born before the start of Sylon continent’s invasion?”

“Un... I was young. Kang Shin, very young.”

“Yeah, yeah, I get it.”

She was emphasizing the fact that she wasn't that old.

“It didn't take, long. The Book Walker's captain descended, 50 years after the first invasion. That was, 80 years after the dungeon, came to Sylon.”

“50 years since the first invasion?”

“At first there were, only a few Book Walkers. Few years later, there were dozens. Ten years later, there were hundreds. That was, when we first started, paying attention to them. Explorers didn't care much. They were overconfident, in the continent's power.”

“Because unlike on Earth, monsters already existed in Sylon continent and there were many ability users who could wield mana.”

On Earth, ability users only appeared after the invasion began. The dungeon seemed to have existed long before then, but there were only a few explorers and no proper organizations either. Earth's situation was vastly different than Sylon's.

However, even Sylon continent had several tens of years before the invasion really began. What did Sylon continent's ability users do during that time?

“Wars between empires and kingdoms. No one paid attention, to the Book Walkers. It was different from Earth. Book Walkers were, considered common mutations of monsters.”

“That’s how they missed several tens of years of preparation.”

“Dungeon explorers... knew other worlds were in danger. But until they were directly faced with danger, they didn’t prepare. What was important to them was land, soldiers, wars, women, and political power. Only a few small kingdoms, like Selone Kingdom, prepared.”

Greed moved people. It was the same on Earth. Everyone thought of monsters as a resource to be exploited. No one considered them as a source of danger threatening humanity even after several countries and regions were lost because of them.

“Earth feels weird. There are very little ability users, it’s easy for strong people to shine. Kang Shin holds the lead, and is very aggressive on monster extermination. This is, our advantage.”

Unfortunately, the reality wasn’t so simple.

“But the invasion is, too fast. Compared to my continent, it’s faster by ten times, or even more.”

“You mean the invasion will only get quicker from now?”

“Invasion, accelerates. Mass infestation... Maybe, next time is the last.”

I knew what the ‘last’ signified. The Demon Lord Army and the monsters, one of the two forces would descend completely... If that happened, it would really be the end. Humanity had started a difficult fight. However, before I felt hopeless, I shook my head.

“No, Loretta said we had two years. We should have 22 months before one of the forces completely descends.”

“Even the dungeon’s Lord, cannot guarantee the time, we have. It would be nice, if we had two years, even if it was two months, we couldn’t say anything. The world is irrational.”

Daisy spoke calmly.

“Kang Shin. Be ready, to lose a little.”

I stopped breathing. It felt like she had seen through my heart.

“You are already, a miracle. But complete defense of Earth is, too hard. It’s nice to have high hopes, but when you fall, there will be, greater pain.”

“I don’t need to hear that right now, Daisy. We’ve defended well until now. Rather than talking about discouraging topics, isn’t it better to talk about how to effectively get rid of those Event Dungeons?”

Hwaya interrupted Daisy. Daisy shrugged and stepped back.

“I just thought, Kang Shin needed to be determined. With determination, it will hurt less. I was a bit worried, for Kang Shin... I experienced, the same thing.”

“I’m worried about Shin too, but...”

Hwaya and Daisy exchanged glances. A few seconds later, Daisy squished her beret down and took a step back, while Hwaya took a step forward with a small sigh. After the inexplicable exchange of glances ended, Hwaya glared at me and pointed at the wall with a stick.

“Let’s change the topic to forming teams.”

The number of red dots on the world map had gone past 200 now, and not even a fifth of Earth had been explored. Hwaya let out a dry cough and touched the crystal ball, making about ten figures next to the world map.

“We’ll need to wait until we finished investigating, but for now, we’ll split into teams.”

On the screen, she displayed the names of Revival’s members and the 7 explorers we’ve chosen so far.

“First, all the explorers broke through the 20th floor. They haven’t appointed anyone yet either.”

“If we knew more Event Dungeons would break out, we would have selected more.”

“There’s nothing we can do about it now. This won’t be the last time Event Dungeons appear either. We just have to increase the number of dungeon explorers before then. In any case, we have to focus on the growth of these seven explorers and other Revival members who didn’t participate in the last Event Dungeon subjugation. We’ll let them form teams and add in one or two Revival members. They’ll focus on conquering low ranked Event Dungeons to farm as many stat points and skill points as possible.”

“We’ll have to be prepared for Event Raids too.”

“Of course. We’ll just add more ability users to the teams and have them clear Event Dungeons quickly. It’ll get busy for a while, so be ready, everyone.”

“I’m ready. I’ve been waiting for this moment. I’ll be of help to everyone.”

Ilayda Van was the first to answer. Mm, it was still hard to talk to her. Michel, haven’t you conquered Ilayda yet!?

“Me too. I won’t be a burden!”

“I’m happy I can get even stronger.”

As Yua clenched her fists, Lebuik also spoke with a wild beast-like smile. On the other hand, Ren stared at the red dots silently and finally spoke with a low tone.

“It’s time to pay back my debts. Crown Prince, what you’ve done for the Panan continent, I will do the same for Earth.”

“Ah, but don’t get a hole in your stomach, Ren. That hurt a lot.”

“You got a hole in your stomach!? Show me, Oppa! Why didn’t you tell me this before!?”

Ah, oops...

Soon afterwards, the seventeen members of Revival, the other seven explorers, and 176 succubi from the battle units formed a total of 16 teams. Although there were teams made of just succubi, there weren’t any made of just explorers. It was because succubi’s special trait allowed them to share information faster and more accurately than explorers’ messaging system.

As for my team, I was the only one in it.

“Hey!”

“We don’t have enough people. It’s not like I don’t want to be

with you, but honestly, you do everything yourself anyways!”

At Hwaya’s heartless selection, I cried. Thankfully, I would at least have Licorice, Plene, and Lotte with me.

Just like that, our third Event Dungeon subjugation mission started.

Chapter 245. What Happened Once Will...

(5)

Although we finished forming our teams, completely discerning the number of Event Dungeons and appropriately distributing the teams had only just begun. We couldn't ignore each country's Freedom Wing and Guardian either. It would be fine if we squashed their spirit like before, but now, they were willing to cooperate. We couldn't just force our way in while there was still room for negotiation.

From clearing Event Dungeons, we could obtain rewards, stat points, and skill points. There was a limit to the rewards we could get from Event Dungeons under A+ rank, and there was currently more than enough of such dungeons to go around for the new Revival members.

If possible, no, certainly, Freedom Wing and Guardian had to also take on Event Dungeons. All these things couldn't be done in a single day, so we had to wait knowing that we were being chased for time.

Of course, we didn't just play around as we waited for the logistics to be taken care of. We immediately called the seven explorers to Korea, and they arrived extremely quickly. They had heard the message when the Event Dungeons spawned and had been waiting for our call. When all seven explorers arrived, I started explaining the current situation.

“Everyone should know what Event Dungeons are, right?”

“Yes.”

“In that case, I hope everyone realizes how much danger Earth is in. Of course, just like we did in the past, Revival plans on destroying all Event Dungeons.”

“I heard we discovered over 800 of them so far.”

At one of the explorers' comment, I shook my head.

“Not even close. There's easily over a thousand of them. The Event Dungeons really outdid themselves this time. The scale is beyond anyone's imagination. We have to hurry.”

“We can clear Event Dungeons, right? There wasn't anything in the contract about them.”

One of the more sensible female explorer asked. I replied with a grin.

“Of course you can. As long as we can get rid of the Event Dungeons, it doesn't matter who does it. We had no plans to limit them in the first place. Now, you must be wondering why we called you here if we didn't plan on restricting you. Well, you should already know the reason. Otherwise, you wouldn't have come.”

“... We can receive Revival’s help?”

This time, it was a male explorer with a fairly deep voice. I nodded.

“Everyone will have to clear Event Dungeons based on their difficulties. You’ll be able to receive help from your governments and institutions. But the time it takes for Event Dungeons to transform into Field Dungeons is... two months. How many dungeons do you think you’ll clear if you work diligently?”

“Not more than thirty, I would think.”

“Fifteen for me... Spain doesn’t have many high rankers.”

“My country is fully supporting me. I’ll be able to do fifty.”

“You should know how many dungeons Revival cleared last time, right?”

Everyone became quiet. Good, I didn’t need to convince them anymore. In the first place, the reason I called them was to give them the maximum benefits. Taking care of them this much... Shouldn’t someone give me an award!?

“Sorry, but we formed teams without your consent. Of course, if you dislike it, we can exclude you and let you work freely. But if you want to be with us...”

I paused for a moment, but seeing the seven explorers looking at me with sparkling eyes, I continued with a wry smile.

“We’ll help you maximize the stats you can gain from Event Dungeons. That will help you in your future dungeon clears too.”

In truth, it won’t just help them, it will help them greatly to the point they can climb to the 50th floor easily. Once we were done, they should be twice as strong as they were now!

As expected, none of them were idiots who would decline such an offer.

Currently, the succubi were busily flapping their bat wings, flying around the whole world to identify the Event Dungeons’ locations, scales, and ranks. At the same time, Hwaya, Sumire, and Sophie who were good at talking to government agencies were busily discussing with each country’s Guardian and Freedom Wing.

Meanwhile, I decided to clean up the region that wouldn’t cause any troubled... South Korea.

“I’ll take this chance and get rid of all the regions occupied by monsters.”

“Jeolla Province, Oppa?”

“Yep.”

From South Jeolla Province to Imsil County in North Jeolla Province was occupied by monsters, an area covering about three fourths of Jeolla Province. Although Korean ability users had tried twice to reclaim this land, they were forced to quit after incurring many casualties. Currently, there was a fence around the border of the region with over 40% of Korean Guardians being deployed to protect it.

I didn't really need anyone to help me, but I threw the seven explorers and other Revival members who needed the stat points into my team. The exception being Sophie, who was in the middle of negotiating with Freedom Wing.

There were 48 Event Dungeons in South Korea. There were too many considering its small size, and most of them were near the occupied Jeolla Province.

In the past, we just cleared the Event Dungeons due to lack of time, but this time, I planned on wiping out every single monster in Jeolla Province. Since I was doing this, I decided to go through Jeolla Province properly. Unexpectedly, the entire South Korea buzzed with our guild house being overwhelmed with reporters.

“Mr. Kang Shin, is there a big reason you decided to reclaim Jeolla Province?”

“Many Korean citizens were asking why you left Jeolla Province alone while you cleared the Philippines. Is there a particular

reason?”

“Do you have any comments on your talk with the government?”

“Joined efforts of Korea’s Guardian and Freedom Wing only faced difficulties in Jeolla Province. Do you have any strategy in mind to chase the monsters out?”

“There are rumors of you and Amy, a Korean and Japan’s hottest idol, being madly in love with each other. Can you comment on that?”

I looked back at Yua who was standing behind me modestly. Other than the red egg in her arms, she was holding herself in the perfect posture. I asked her a short question.

“Who’s Amy, Yua?”

“Huhu, Oppa doesn’t have to know. It’s nothing important. She’s just some ugly woman.”

Ren, who was watching us from the side, murmured with a strange expression.

“So this was the reason I knew more about Earth’s idols than Crown Prince... Amy... She’s pretty...”

“Ren-nim, can you repeat that? You were looking at Earth’s idols

while you should be taking care of the children?”

“L-Lebuik? Your eyes are scary. Uuk, sorry, I’m sorry! I won’t do it again!”

Seeing what happened between Ren and Lebuik with a simple question, I realized asking more questions would only get more annoying. I chased the reporters away and got on the plane with everyone else. To finish clearing Korea’s dungeons, I needed a plane.

In truth, there wasn’t a particular reason that I left Jeolla Province alone. When we were clearing the second wave of Event Dungeons, we didn’t have time to care about reclaiming lands. Afterwards, there were much more important things to do than reclaiming Jeolla Province. After reclaiming the Philippines, I thought about reclaiming Korea’s lost lands, but too many things had happened one after the other.

Plus, talk with the government? If I said I wanted to clean up Jeolla Province, they should kowtow and thank me. They weren’t in any position to demand anything from me. After all, there was nothing they could do for me.

This was also the first time I heard about this Amy woman. In the first place, I haven’t watched TV in a long time, so I didn’t know the names of any idols. Unlike other girls her age, Yua also didn’t have any interest in idols. Us brother and sister were rather apathetic in this regard. Naturally, I was stunned by this rumor of me going out with an idol. It made me realize how famous I had gotten.

Finally, in regards to the strategy for reclaiming Jeolla Province, I indeed had one.

“Wow, how pretty. I’m surprised she isn’t human.”

“Only someone of Revival’s master caliber can possess such a beautiful monster.”

“I wish I had a girlfriend, even if she’s a monster.”

While some of the explorers were whispering among themselves, Plene hopped out of the plane and stood next to me. She was tightly holding on to a short black rod, which she held up next to her mouth. It was a magical tool devised by me and crafted by the First Dungeon’s famous artifact crafter, Hobgoblin Eladel.

It was a microphone of sort that had the power to amplify the range and effect of magical power in sounds. Although the effect wasn’t amplified by much, the range was more than doubled. The material to craft the microphone came from Beyond. As Beyond didn’t drop crafting materials often, I only had enough to craft this one item, but it was the perfect magical tool for Plene!

... In truth, I was looking to make a magical tool that could amplify the effect of my Evil Eyes, but due to a lack of material and technique, I had to settle with this. I tried not to think about it too much as it hurt me.

In any case, the strategy I had was using Plene's singing and my Evil Eyes. It was the most effective and destructive combination for instantly cleaning up a wide area.

The explorers, who didn't know my Evil Eyes' power, seemed worried when they heard Plene would be attracting monsters with her singing. However, Ilayda, Leon, and Michel who knew about my power looked at Plene and me with excitement.

Plene cleared her throat and gave me a bright smile.

"Ehem, I'll show you my improved singing skills. Shin will fall in love with it too!"

"Yep, I'm leaving it to you. Thanks as always."

"I got complimented! Shin complimented me!"

When Plene jumped happily, Lotte, who was prepared to fly up whenever I gave the signal, flapped her wings in discomfort and scolded her.

[Can you just start singing, stupid?]

"Shin said I wasn't stupid! The person who calls others stupid is stupid!"

[I'm not human. I'm a wyvern, stupid.]

“Hic... Uwaaaah!”

“Lotte, don’t make her cry!”

From then, it took 3 minutes for Plene to calm down and start singing.

“Lalala~”

[... Hmph, you’re stupid, but I’ll admit you can sing.]

“It’ll get busy soon, so let’s listen to her sing for now.”

Plene’s beautiful ringing voice seemed to dig deep into our hearts as everyone stood enchanted by her singing. At the same time, her voice spread to the entire Imsil County. Plene could already send her singing voice far and wide, but with the magical tool’s amplification, her voice reached even farther.

Through the crumbled buildings, dense trees, and tall mountains and hills, her singing voice left the whole world listening and breathless.

“Lalala~ Lalalala~”

“My god.”

“Is this a voice a human can have? Ah, she’s a monster.”

“I think Amy sings better...”

“Shh! Didn’t you hear? The guild master is going out with Amy. Be quiet.”

“I’m not. I don’t even know her face!”

This damned Amy! If I ever see her, she’s going to get an earful from me! As I growled at the other explorers, we could see the mob of monsters rushing towards us. Seeing the monsters filling up the sky and earth while stampeding through the already crumbled buildings, the explorers who were enjoying Plene’s singing turned pale.

“Isn’t this a bit dangerous!?”

“Just how many are there?”

“I was looking down on Korea’s monsters, but Korea was actually this dangerous... Damn.”

The explorers made understandable reactions and tensed up. I grinned and slowly flew up on Lotte’s back. I closed my eyes and whispered to Lotte.

“Sorry, Lotte. Things are going to get busy from now.”

[I already became one with Hero, so Hero doesn't need to apologize.]

“... Right, thanks.”

[I could say the same.]

After this short conversation, I opened my eyes. The thousands of monsters flying in the sky instantly turned to stone and fell.

“Monsters of earth, take this! Evil Eyes of Petrification, Stone Rain!”

Of course, Stone Rain wasn't a real skill, but the effect was good enough to be considered a real skill, as giant rocks pummeling down from the sky could deal ample damage to even powerful monsters.

Monsters stampeding towards us were promptly squashed by the raining stones. Those that survived looked up instinctively and were turned into stone by my Evil Eyes. As all monsters within my vision met this same fate, it only took three minutes for the tens of thousands of monsters to turn into stone.

In the past, we would have moved to different locations to sing, but Plene's current range of singing was nothing like the past. She didn't need to stop singing and we didn't need to move elsewhere.

We could end everything here!

“Come! Come!”

“The hell is this...”

“I’ve heard the stories, but seeing it in person is...”

“[Shin. Maybe he really is a god.](#)”

That day, we successfully wiped the sea of monsters in Jeolla Province and cleared all Event Dungeons. The explorers who followed me there came out with dozens of bonus stats and luxurious equipment, and Chaotic Spear finally reached 80% in growth.

The next day, the real Event Dungeon conquest began.

Remember, Shin means god in Korean.

Chapter 246. What Happened Once Will...

(6)

“Careful, Shin. I’m sure you’ll be fine with Licorice and Lotte around, but if someone on the Lava King’s level appears, you have to wait for us. Got it?”

“You’re the one who put me in a team by myself...”

“That’s that, and this is this.”

I flicked back Hwaya’s forehead as she approached me. Seeing her rub her forehead and mumbling in complaint drew a smile on my face.

“Don’t worry and leave it to me. I’ll come back safe and sound.”

“... Yeah.”

Unlike me, Hwaya had one explorer, Michel, and Ilayda in her team. Other members of Revival were in similar teams. The reason I was in a team by myself was that there was just too many Event Dungeons. Someone had to decrease the number without caring for the stat points and rewards. More exactly, the number of Event Dungeons I was in charge of was 317. In other words, I would have to clear about five Event Dungeons per day. Among them were 60 S rank dungeons.

“Dear Husband, let’s go. Uhuhu.”

“Licorice, you better not try anything funny, or else...”

“I know, Hwaya.”

“Kuu, I can’t trust you...!”

With Licorice and Plene, I hopped on Lotte’s back. As some of the other teams had already set out, only a few came to see me off, though there were plenty of reporters with mics and cameras pointed towards me.

[Hero, can I step on them before I fly up?]

“Sorry, Lotte. I don’t want to make headlines like that.”

Lotte snorted as if she wasn’t content, then flapped her wings and blew the crowd away. Next, flapping her red striped wings once more, she kicked off the ground and into the air.

[Where are we going, Hero!?!]

“We’re going to fly around the Pacific and clear the ocean based dungeons. Then, we’ll clean up the rest of Oceania starting from Papua New Guinea.”

“So Dear Husband’s scale of operation is the five seas and the six continents... Will we be able to go through an entire continent and an ocean in just two months?”

“Actually, we have another continent and another ocean too.”

I spoke calmly.

“We’re also in charge of Antarctica and the Antarctic Ocean. You guys brought your anti-cold equipment right?”

“... Kyaaak! What is Dear Husband and Hwaya thinking!? That’s a third of Earth! Dear Husband is in charge of a third of Earth? Is the word ‘impossible’ in Dear Husband’s dictionary?”

The tight schedule caused Licorice to scream. I patted her head and consoled her.

“That just shows how much of an emergency we’re in. With Plene’s ability and my ability, we’ll be able to take care of dungeons under SS rank quickly, so it won’t be that difficult. I’ll let everyone rest once a week too.”

“But Dear Husband is going to go the dungeon while we’re resting.”

“Uk!”

Licorice's razor sharp comment almost cut me. Licorice looked at me disapprovingly and spoke.

"I already know how Dear Husband thinks. Dear Husband is planning on climbing the First Dungeon while we're sleeping and breaking through Beyond during the once a week break, right?"

"Uk."

It was all true. There was nothing for me to argue about. Seeing me speechless, Licorice made a wry smile.

"I can somewhat understand how Dear Husband has gotten so strong at such a young age. Dear Husband can't stop climbing the dungeon with the situation Earth is in, right?"

"Right, I can't stop even if I know I shouldn't rush myself."

I could easily climb the dungeon at the moment due to the vast difference between my strength and the dungeon's required standard. However, this wouldn't continue forever. I would eventually reach a wall. I had to climb the dungeon as much as I could if I had the time.

... Especially since I might arrive at that wall within these two months.

The Pacific Ocean was Earth's largest and deepest ocean. Over 100 Event Dungeons had spawned in the Pacific Ocean. On average,

their difficulty ratings were higher than land based Event Dungeons, as it was hard to find dungeons ranked below B.

“There weren’t that many underwater dungeons last time.”

Four days after we left Korea, I murmured after clearing the 27th underwater dungeon and popping out of the water. Plene who also peeked out of the water next to me squeezed her wet hair and laughed happily.

“I love water!”

“I hate it. My wings and tail get wet.”

“I agree. I hate the ocean.”

Licorice wrapped herself and Lotte in a bubble and was floating in the air. With a single wave of her hand, she summoned several tens of bats outside the bubble and spread them out. They were looking for the next nearest dungeon for us to visit.

“Ah, there’s a S+ rank dungeon nearby.”

“I can get stat points. Let’s hurry. Don’t make that face.”

“I really hate water. Hero is stupid...”

“Can’t Dear Husband go alone? No, nevermind. Let’s go. We can’t leave Dear Husband to just this idiot. Ehew.”

Unlike Plene, who loved the ocean as expected of a siren, the two winged girls really hated the Pacific Ocean. Licorice seemed to hate oceans in general, while Lotte didn’t go well with water due to her being a wyvern and a flame wielder. If she couldn’t transform into a human, she would have refused to go underwater.

“Lotte, is there a water king or an ocean king?”

I asked Lotte out of curiosity. Now that we were focusing on the ocean, it was a natural question to ask.

After the first monster outbreak, most sea routes in the Pacific became sealed off. Large sea monsters made nests in the Pacific, and ravaged any ships that crossed their territories. If they at least spoke human language, people might have tried to negotiate with them, but that was clearly not the case with the monsters.

Countries that relied on ocean based trade were affected greatly, and some even faced economic crisis. Thankfully, the monster invasion also changed many countries’ landscape, bringing along new crops, new minerals, and monster materials. Without these, the population of Earth may be much less than it is now. It was a form of ‘giving one diseases while giving him medicines.’

Of course, Korea was one of these heavily affected countries. In many ways, Korea was quite unlucky.

Additionally, many sea routes in other oceans had been recovered, but only the Pacific Ocean was still completely blocked. The Atlantic Ocean and the Indian Ocean were fine, but only the Pacific Ocean was wrought with reapers that refused to leave. There were even suspicions that a super massive monster was living in the Pacific Ocean.

“Don’t think you can just attach the word ‘king’ wherever you want, Hero.”

“Uk.”

Lotte’s rebuttal stung me slightly.

“The Lava King was a flame dragon. He was known as an elemental king for his ability to completely reign over fire. Even in my world, there aren’t many capable of doing that. There was one more, but I don’t know much because I lived too far away from that being.”

“So what are the chances that he’s a water king?”

“How persistent, Hero. There is no such thing as a water king.”

To be honest, that was good news for me. I had come to the Pacific to clean up the Event Dungeons, but it was also to reopen the land like I did for the Philippines or the Jeolla Province.

This was something I had only talked to Hwaya about. No one

else in Revival knew about it. After all, cleaning up the Event Dungeons in my area was different than completely cleaning up the area. But if I didn't take back the land and ocean stolen by monsters, humanity would eventually lose their dominance to monsters.

I had no plans to volunteer myself for the good of humanity, but it would be sad if there were no humans to live on Earth after I defeated the world's enemy. ... I was feeling embarrassed for nothing.

“Eit, let's hurry! We're going to finish the Pacific within two weeks and go to Oceania!”

“It's only been two weeks since we reclaimed the Philippines, and even that took a whole week. Dear Husband wants to clean up this huge Pacific Ocean in just two weeks? Is Dear Husband insane?”

“Of course I'm sane. We already made a lot of progress! Come on, let's go!”

Once we entered an Event Dungeon, even if the dungeon was underwater, the dungeon rarely had anything to do with water. Most had solid ground for us to walk on, and we just had to wipe the monsters in the dungeon.

As I said before, since I decided to purify the entire Pacific Ocean, I had to get used to underwater combat. More exactly, I had to get used to massacring monsters with my ability while making use Plene's ability.

If there was one thing we felt thankful for, it was that Plene's singing worked even better underwater than it did on land.

Plene sang more calmly underwater and her voice inexplicably reached even farther underwater than it did on land.

Once she started singing, monsters within a vast area flocked towards us, and I just needed to widen my eyes and turn them to stone. Since Peika was limited in using her power with allies underwater, Sharana and Ruyue materialized into human forms and went around breaking the stones. If one ignored all the monsters, the scene was rather mystical and beautiful.

While a beautiful girl sang an enchanting song, two equally beautiful girls freely swam through the water with their hands flashing colorfully!

[I've never seen such a beautiful massacre in my life, including anything I've seen in my world!]

[Hero, haven't you killed over a hundred million with your eyes now...?]

If Licorice and Lotte didn't interrupt me, I could have stayed in this fairytale like trance forever. With nothing better to do, I glared at the two girls.

[Hundred million? Please.]

Using my mana, I pulled on the bubbles rising up from my mouth every time I talked. As I played around with them, I continued.

[It should be well over a billion by now.]

Eighteen days after I began my work in the Pacific, I was left standing in front of the final Event Dungeon. It was an SSS rank dungeon, located in Mariana Trench's Challenger Deep, the deepest known point of the world's oceans. Just based on its location, I should have started off here, but I wanted to leave it for last as it was the highest ranked dungeon.

[This is the last one. Surprisingly, we cleaned up this huge ocean without problem.]

[Do SSS+ ranked monsters not faze Hero in the slightest now...?]

Well, large monsters did appear the closer we got to the center of the Pacific Ocean. I could finally understand why the Pacific Ocean stayed blocked this whole time. However, as I had already fought against countless SSS+ ranked monsters like the Destroyers in the Philippines, these monsters were only slightly bigger and less scarier versions. They really weren't hard to deal with.

I was very fortunate to have fought extra massive salmons. There were even some that were pregnant. I suspected that the reason they couldn't swim upstream was because they were too fat.

[It's a good thing we have more snacks to go along with wine. Hwaya will be happy. Well... Should we go in?]

[The dungeon is one thing, but there might be other monsters outside. Be careful, Hero.]

[Right. I can feel something other than the dungeon. It's getting on my nerves.]

[Mmm, should I sing?]

While we chatted, we slowly descended into the ocean. I could feel the aura Licorice was talking about, but as it didn't seem too troubling, I simply continued on, ready to attack whenever.

Suddenly, my body stopped as if it hit a wall. I muttered annoyed.

[Damn it.]

I looked at Lotte who was in Licorice's air bubble and asked.

[Lotte, didn't you say there was no Water King...?]

[Well, Hero... We should run!]

It was too late. In an instant, a large lifeform in the bottom of the

Mariana Trench roared!

[Guooooooooooo! You came, Hero!]

[The 'Hermit King' Grand Raid commences! You met one of the enemies aiming for the world's power! The dungeon's power is not fully effective against worlds' enemies. The Grand Raid system exists to give what little support it can to explorers who are fighting against the worlds' enemies. The Lord's blessing converges on your party. As a result, the enemy can only ignore up to 30% of your party members' skills and levels!]

[Absolute Soul nullifies a part of the enemy's power. Your skills and levels will be 90% effective against the enemy!]

[Remember that you will not be able to bring out your items' and skills' full power. We wish you luck! You will receive a huge reward if you defeat the Hermit King!]

Chapter 247. What Happened Twice Will...

(7)

I instantly recognized the being that appeared in front of us. It was incredibly difficult not to, given his humongous size. On the other hand, he was extremely thin! Long serrated tail that stretched out backwards and forward-facing eyes. He was...

[A ray! You're a ray!]

[I'm the king of all who hides, the king of all who protect their lofty leagues by hiding! I am the Hermit King!]

[Ah, an electric ray! Plene, it's dangerous. Go back to the mansion!]

[You! Listen to me!]

As I coincidentally knew the characteristics of an electric ray, I quickly summoned Peika and infused her into my body, and glanced at Plene to motion for her to leave. However, Plene shook her head helplessly.

[It won't open. I can't go back!]

[No one can escape from me! I am the Hermit King, appearing only when my victory is assured, leaving no prey behind!]

[Gaze activates! Your movement speed falls slightly. You cannot open your inventory. Your health and mana recovery speed decreases slightly. When being gazed at by your enemy, you will not be able to use Return!]

[Damn!]

Was the Gaze skill something all worlds' enemies could use!? Being stared down by his eyes, I couldn't get myself to calm down. There was no choice but to fight him. Before he attacked, I quickly called Sharana and Ruyue.

[Protect everyone, Sharana, Ruyue!]

[Leave it to us!]

Almost immediately afterwards, the electric ray shot out pale blue lightning from his entire body.

[Pay the price for your impudence to this king!]

[Peika!]

[I can handle this much!]

As we were underwater, his lightning spread to all sides the moment it was released. We were instantly enveloped by his lightning, and I grit my teeth and endured it with Peika's power.

At the same time, I felt something strange.

[... Isn't this guy weak?]

[I think so too!]

His attack wasn't as bad as I'd expected. Of course, it was partly because of Peika's power as a lightning elemental, but Peika was still just an elemental while our opponent was a world's enemy. It was strange that we could take on his attack so easily.

When I turned around, Ruyue and Sharana seemed to have also held on by freezing and strengthening the air bubble Lotte, Plene, and Licorice were in. The fact that the lightning's power spread by being underwater instead of concentrating in one place also seemed to have helped, but still...

[Now that I think about it, Gaze skill's effect was weak too Its effect is probably proportional to the user's power. Not to mention...]

Even if the Hermit King was a hermit and was an expert in hiding as he said, why would he have stayed hidden all this time on Earth?

Now that I thought about it, the Mariana Trench was close to the Philippines. Right.

Philippines. Until not long ago, there was a terrifying monster

there.

“The Lava King was looking for you.”

[You met the Lava King, Hero!? B-But there is no way he knows where I am!]

He bit the bait.

“You were hiding from him!”

[I was concealing myself! I was not hiding from the other kings because I was afraid!]

As I thought, he was hiding from the Lava King. Afraid he would be discovered if he moved, he hid in the Mariana Trench, which was the deepest place on Earth!

I had considered it when I heard Lotte speak. Although the five kings shared the same goal, it seemed their relationship wasn't particularly good. If a king had to hide in fear of another king, this couldn't be the only case.

Now that the thought crossed my mind, I couldn't help but laugh. I could understand why he appeared so grandly. We must have been the first humans he saw in a long time! Not to mention, since Earth's Hero, who was his main target, appeared in front of him on his own, he must have been extremely happy.

The Hermit King seemed to have noticed what I was thinking, as he spoke in an uncomfortable tone.

[Earth's Hero is so arrogant. If we knew you were so foolish, we wouldn't have all needed to come!]

“Stop talking shit and come!”

I didn't even need to provoke him, as he immediately released another powerful lightning attack. Though I didn't know exactly where to attack, I charged towards his body and shouted.

“How are our reinforcements!?”

[We'll have to give up, Dear Husband! Even the closest team needs 2 hours to come!]

I took the Hermit King's lightning directly and pondered as I endured it. Rather than enduring his attacks for 2 hours, although it might be dangerous, it was better to go on the offensive and aim for his life. Since I couldn't open my inventory, I had to fight with just the few potions I had on hand. It was impossible to hold out for two hours with so few potions.

[Show me the power of a Hero!]

[Damn right I will!]

After replying to the Hermit King, I used Weapon Swap to equip my crossbow and shot dozens of bolts towards him. He seemed surprised at the invisible attack, but just as I expected, the bolts had little effect.

[Is this it!?!]

[I bet it stung more than your lightning!]

I didn't expect much from my attack in the first place. The crossbow was good for attacking the unexpected enemy in their vitals, but even if I shot his eyes, the bolts couldn't even leave a scratch. Rather than doing damage, it only made him angrier.

Even if the Hermit King seemed weak, it didn't change the fact that he was one of the five kings. It would be a different story if all members of Revival were here, but it was indeed difficult to take him on just by myself. If I used Overlord already, I would certainly lose.

However, if I could force him to let his guard down, it was undoubtedly possible for me to defeat him alone. And to force him to let his guard down...

[Dear Husband, I'll join you!]

[I hate getting wet, but... I hate seeing Hero getting hurt even more.]

[I, I'll sing too!]

“Just make sure you don't get injured! Ruyue, protect Licorice and Plene! Sharana, protect Lotte!”

[Un!]

[Understood!]

With the elementals' help, Licorice, Lotte, and Plene charged into battle. To block the lightning the Hermit King was releasing even now, Ruyue protected the air bubble Licorice and Plene were in, and Sharana enveloped Lotte's body with her wind to allow her to freely move underwater without getting wet. Though they couldn't nullify the Hermit King's lightning entirely, it was still better than receiving his attack directly.

As Licorice could use powerful magic in all elements, she could perform better than I can against worlds' enemies. Similarly for Lotte, as long as she wasn't beaten by the Hermit King's lightning, she could deal great damage to the electric ray with her power of fire.

On the other hand, it was hard for Plene to do anything against him. It was unknown how much her songs could affect the Hermit King. However, it seemed she had something in mind, as she started to sing with a resolute face.

[Lalalala~]

Her voice flowed out of the air bubble strengthened by Ruyue's power without any resistance. I had expected this much to happen, but what I didn't expect was what happened next. Her voice didn't travel far and stayed close to us. This strange scene made even the Hermit King stop attacking. The effect of Plene's singing was then notified through a message.

[Siren's 'Song of Blessing' resounds. Your speed increases greatly and your resistance to the enemy's magical attacks increases. Your chance of receiving critical hits decreases, while your chance of dealing critical hits increases.]

[This is... a buff!?!]

I was surprised even though I was experiencing it directly. To think that sirens could use buff type skills. I had always thought Plene specialized in drawing in mobs and using curses and debuffs, but it seemed that wasn't the case.

When I looked behind me, Plene was making a proud expression as she continued singing. I would need to compliment her later. Though, I'd also need to complain why she didn't tell us about it earlier.

[What a beautiful song. What a beautiful woman!]

"He's coming!"

He was releasing lightning once again! I jumped in directly and used Weapon Swap to equip Chaotic Spear.

“Peika, focus on defense for now!”

[Okay!]

Lotte, who could now move as if she was flying thanks to Sharana’s power, was charging towards the Hermit King from the opposite side. Seeing as how her face was heated red, it seemed she would breathe out fire the moment she reached the Hermit King.

I also rushed forward, aiming for the Hermit King’s eyes which had been bothering me for a while. Although his lightning became fiercer and took away my health, that much pain didn’t faze me in the slightest.

“Let’s see how strong your eyes are!”

[You think I’ll let you!?!]

The Hermit King snorted and trembled. Immediately, I stopped my charge. He had disappeared completely.

“I can’t detect him.”

I thought it was an invisibility skill, but that wasn’t it. I couldn’t

feel his presence at all. Lotte, who was rushing forward from the opposite side, also stopped with a confused look. Hermit King, to think he had an ability like this!

[Good, that's the expression I like to see! I'll first swallow your woman along with her singing!]

His voice rang out from afar. He wasn't aiming for me, but rather Plene and Licorice!

“Damn, is it teleportation!?”

The giant ray opened his mouth. Before it shut and swallowed Licorice and Plene, Licorice spread her arm out. Immediately, a pillar of ice appeared from the bottom of his mouth to the ceiling.

[Kuaaaaa!]

The Hermit King howled and spat out lightning, but Licorice worked with Ruyue and had already escaped from his range.

[Elemental, move!]

[I was going to!]

“Kuk!”

He was charging towards Licorice and Plene again! I used Divine Speed and shot out the Chaotic Spear in my hand. The target point was his eye!

“Die!”

[How laughable!]

The water resistance caused the spear slowed down even more than I expected, but it thankfully struck the Hermit King before he could dodge it.

However, even though the spear had penetrated deep into its eye, the Hermit King didn't seem too affected by it. It made sense. No matter how much I strengthened it with my Heroic Aura, compared to his giant eye, it was like a toothpick.

[Kuhaha, what did you do!? I was expecting much more from you, but in the end, you're just a human!]

“You better fix that impatient personality of yours first!”

I sneered at him and clenched my fist. Following Peruta Circuit's energy, connecting my fist and my spear, my mana ignited chaos flames and burned his eye's inside.

Chaos flames were flames in the end. As they couldn't be easily ignited underwater, this was what I had thought of. As it relied on high class techniques like Peruta Circuit and Mad Typhoon, its

effect was indeed excellent.

[Kuuuuk!]

“Good, chaos flames work!”

In the past, I couldn't take out chaos flames as the opponent was the Lava King. This time, however, the opponent was a underwater monster. Fire was perfect for cooking fish! After being confident in the amount of chaos flames I ignited, I pulled back on my hand slightly and retrieved the spear. This strange flame that didn't lose out to the Hermit King's resistance continued to burn wonderfully.

[I see, this flame won't go away until I kill you, Hero...!]

He seemed to have realized what he was dealing with as he turned to directly face me. Blue lightning repeatedly crackled around him and diffusing into the surroundings. An overwhelming amount of mana that I had felt from the Lava King before was gathering within him.

[This is the power of a king! Despair!]

[I will not let Hero get hurt!]

Before the Hermit King released his lightning, Lotte's kick struck his tail. Kick!? I doubted my eyes for a moment, but Lotte was indeed flying through the water at an incredible speed and

continuously kicking his tail.

Immediately afterwards, about half of his tail was severed. The Blaze Queen's focused attacks had been strong enough to annihilate a part of a king's body. The problem was the Hermit King's response.

[Fine, I'll kill this annoying bitch first!]

The lightning building up in his body instantly shot out towards Lotte! Although Lotte shot back and Sharana cast a barrier of wind around her, the Hermit King's lightning couldn't be stopped.

Damn, even with Divine Speed, I couldn't get close enough to her! Although I had gotten used to moving underwater, the Hermit King's lightning was still faster than I could reach my hand forward...!

[This ray!]

Almost as if she read my mind, Licorice reached her hand forward in my place. Sucking in Licorice's boundless magic power, pillars of ice appeared everywhere and slammed down on the giant ray's body. However, these pillars couldn't stop his lightning, and blue lightning struck Lotte.

[Kuuk!]

“Lotte!”

[It's okay, it wasn't a direct hit!]

My heart dropped, thinking I might lose her, but Sharana's confident shout calmed me down. However, Lotte was still incapacitated from the attack.

This was my mistake. Although I had attacked with chaos flames, Lotte was hurt because I underestimated his lightning. In exchange for injuring the king, Lotte was taken out of fight. It was simple to see that we were at a disadvantage.

Thankfully, the Hermit King's affinity with water didn't seem as high as the Lava King's affinity with fire, as he couldn't recover his injuries through contact with water.

[I will show you why this Hermit King is so fearful!]

However, with these words, the Hermit King's presence disappeared once again. In that instant, I realized his secret.

I became certain.

I could defeat him!

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(8)

Immediately afterwards, I used Divine Speed and shot towards a certain direction. As expected, he appeared in front of Lotte and opened his mouth.

[This is for my tail!]

“You won’t touch Lotte!”

I barely made it in time to guard Lotte. It was thanks to knowing who he was attacking that i got there on time. I immediately shot my spear towards the ceiling of his opened mouth.

[I won’t fall for this twice!]

“I’ll say the same thing!”

Before my spear struck him, a radiant blue light shone from his belly, and he spat out an incredible amount of lightning. The Chaotic Spear lost its strength and was reflected back into my hands. I had expected this much to happen. With a firm mind, I drew forth the power of Absolute Soul and circulated Peruta Circuit.

“Peika, we’re going all out!”

[Don't worry, Master! Believe in me that believes in Master!]

Peruta Circuit's spinning surged fiercely and a whirlpool swirled around me. The Hermit King's powerful lightning was absorbed into the path of Peruta Circuit and flowed into me. If I moved, Lotte would be hit by the lightning once more. To make sure no one was hurt by his lightning, I planned to receive all of his lightning myself.

[Do you seek death!?!]

“You want to kill me with this? Keep dreaming!”

The giant whirlpool I created hindered my vision, but it was the best for stopping the Hermit King's movements and his lightning. Even though Peruta Circuit's powerful spinning seemed like it wanted to break my body, I sped it up without hesitation. Following the whirlpool, the Hermit King's lightning was directed to only target me.

“Huuuu... Haaaap!”

I withstood the pain. The conditions were all met. The lightning elemental Peika was infused in my body, and Peruta Circuit was the best tool for manipulating mana. In addition, I had the power to transform hostile mana into mine, Absolute Soul!

I opened my golden Evil Eyes and shouted.

“Let’s go!”

[Foolish, you think your Evil Eyes can stop me!?!]

“Huaaaaaaap!”

In an instant, a portion of the Hermit King’s wild lightning began to follow my control. The blue lightning began to turn golden, as I felt both pain from the ferocious lightning and joy from turning it into a power I could control. The Hermit King shouted in shock.

[Your Evil Eyes can control lightning!?!]

“I wish!”

Although his body emitted more and more lightning, I received them all without hesitation. My health fell, while my magic power rose. Using this magic power, I restored my damaged body. It was a conversion of mana and health. Peruta Circuit had the ability to heal injured internal organs.

[Dear Husband, you’ll die if you continue!]

“Don’t worry about me and look after Lotte! Attack the Hermit King when you can!”

[Lalalala~!]

While unintelligible screams rang in my ears, Plene's silvery singing voice rose. Her song calmed my mind and filled my body with strength.

The lightning that had mostly become golden by now circulated around my body following Peruta Circuit's flow and clashed with the blue lightning that continued to assault me. I held my spear up once again. The Hermit King seemed to have given up on devouring Lotte, as he approached me with a glaring look.

[I don't know how you know the Lava King, but I'll engrave into your brain the fact that I am stronger!]

“Go ahead.”

Immediately, the Hermit King disappeared again. For somehow holding the lofty title of a king, he acted more like a lowly assassin.

The golden lightning surged as I poured it into my spear and shot it forward. The lightning didn't disperse just because I was underwater. Like a laser beam, the lightning struck the mouth of the Hermit King who appeared in the path of my attack. It seemed that although he was able to wield lightning didn't mean he had resistance to lightning, as the surface of his giant mouth was burnt black. He shouted in shock.

[How did you find out!?!]

“Because of your awful smell!”

[Kuaaaaa!]

Pure lightning crackled as if to boil the surrounding ocean water. From what I could tell, these king-level bastards were all powerful, but could only use their abilities in the simplest ways! I was about to thrust forward with my spear, when I realized I had a new power I could freely use.

“Trishula!”

[Trishula manifests in your spear for 30 minutes. Your spear technique’s rank increases by one. When attacking, you have a 10% chance to deal three consecutive damage.]

When I used one of Shiva’s power’s, Trishula, a brilliant red aura descended on the Chaotic Spear. Setting aside Trishula’s actual effects, just being able to manifest a god’s power in my weapon for 30 minutes a day was amazing. It meant I could kill a world’s enemy without having to use Overlord!

[The aura of an ominous god!]

The Hermit King’s presence disappeared once again. I indifferently swung Trishula and shot out its red aura.

“Stop hiding and fight me directly!”

[Kuaaaa!]

A huge ball of blue lightning was flying towards me. The Hermit King had appeared above me and spat out lightning. Wasn't he supposed to be an electric ray!?

[The ability to wield lightning is not something a mere human can have!]

“But you're going to die to a mere human!”

Believing in the power of Peruta Circuit that enveloped me, I charged towards the lightning ball. At that moment, Licorice used her magic. Because she was taking so long, I thought she was using a massive attack magic, but it turned out that my guess was wrong. The large scarlet aura from her magic quickly flew towards me.

[Don't die, Dear Husband!]

“What, you can buff too!?”

The moment Licorice's magic hit me, I felt like everything in the world was rushing towards me.

[Succubus Queen's highest rank magic, 'Love', activates. Your affinity to everything in the world increases. The increase is proportional to the receiver's charm!]

Dear god. I could see why she took so long to use this magic. Knowing that she wouldn't be able to do much against the Hermit King, she had used her strongest magic to support me!

Affinity was a terrifying factor in battle. Just by having one's affinity increased, one's ability to control the elements increased and one's resistance also increased. The Hermit King's giant ball of lightning wasn't so overbearing anymore! Plus, as my affinity to water had also increased, my movements also became more natural. Having my affinity increased was what allowed for this miracle to happen!

In the next moment, I clashed with the ball of lightning. I could hear someone's scream, but...

[You won't even have the time to feel pain!]

"Of course... not!"

The giant ball of lightning was slowly absorbed into my body. Peruta Circuit's spin was fiercer than ever before, and Mad Typhoon, strengthened by a rank with Trishula's power, used this spin to rouse an aura stronger than ever before.

[Peruta – Mad Typhoon became level 5. You perfectly resonated the flow of Peruta Circuit with your spear. You obtained the basis to cut and pulverize any energy in the world.]

"Perfect timing!"

The ball of blue lightning shrunk and began to change in color. What I just did was nothing special. With the power Licorice gave me, I could wield lightning however I wanted! Even if it belonged to the world's enemy!

“Lightning... is under my control!”

“Kuaaaa!”

[You used Frozen Roar! All enemies in the battlefield freezes in place. All allies temporarily become super-armored and has all abilities increased by 50%. Your chance of landing a critical hit doubles when fighting enemies affected by Frozen Roar.]

[It did not have a great effect against your enemy!]

[You think a roar of this level can suppress me!?!]

Despite Frozen Roar's power, his lightning became fiercer. It made sense that he was good at hiding since he was the Hermit King, but how was it fair that he was so skilled in wielding an element!? I widened my eyes while making the lightning mine. With Mad Typhoon, I forcefully drew in the lightning I couldn't suppress and infused it with my spear. Immediately afterwards, I only shot forth the energy stored in my spear.

“Eat this! Divine Speed, Heroic Strike!”

I wasn't thrusting my spear, nor was I striking down with it. As long as I concentrated my entire body's energy into a single point and shot it out as an aura, I could call it a Heroic Strike!

The new version of Heroic Strike, birthed from the pinnacle of spear technique and mana control, showed its effectiveness immediately. A platinum colored aura that I shot forward flew through the air like a beam of light and struck the Hermit King directly.

It penetrated the Hermit King's mouth and left through the end of his tail. The difference between the attack just now and the aura I shot out before that burned the surface of his mouth was the difference between a BB gun pellet and a 85mm cannon ball.

Although the previous attack used close to 100,000 mana from my maximum of 180,000, with the mana I received from his lightning attack, it wasn't a big problem!

[Kuaaak!]

“Can you still say you control lightning!?”

[Don't... Don't think you can be so arrogant after only a small penetration wound!]

With that, he disappeared once again. His large body, which could easily swallow our guild house, was nowhere to be seen, as if it was erased completely from this world.

[I'll admit it.]

His voice rang out.

[I am the weakest of the five kings.]

I grinned. His lightning had finally submitted to me, flowing around me with a golden color through Peruta Circuit's rotation. Why didn't the water discharge it? That water was also layered on top of the golden lightning, flowing around me in a whirlpool. I could feel that I was mastering Peruta Circuit bit by bit.

[Everyone wanted my death and wanted to take away my title of a king.]

"I'm sure they did."

He ignored my sarcastic remark and continued.

[But I survived for countless years and arrived on this Earth. If you want, I'll kindly tell you the reason.]

In an instant, my left arm was pierced through. It had happened suddenly without a trace.

[Dear Husband!]

“Don’t come close! Stay on the defensive!”

The pierced area was so small that my armor wasn’t even fragmented. Still, it was true that an attack had penetrated through my arm. I withstood the pain I felt from my arm and held up my spear. The feeling in my left arm was strange. I felt like it wouldn’t last long. It couldn’t be naturally healed either. I needed to use the Elixir in my inventory. To use it, I needed to kill the Hermit King.

[Next is your heart.]

“Overlord!”

I quickly used Overlord. I couldn’t save it anymore. This fight would end in the next five, no, one minute!

[You have a truly powerful aura. You are worthy of calling yourself a Hero. However, a powerful strength...!]

My left foot was pierced through. I grit my teeth and roused the power of Overlord, dying the golden lightning around me black. The Peruta Circuit that was engraved firmly into my body made screeching noises as it writhed in pain.

[... becomes weak when you lose focus. I wonder how long it will take until the energy staying in your heart disappears. Next, your thigh.]

In the next instant, my thigh was pierced through. The energy of Enigma was boiling, but it still couldn't defend against the Hermit King's attack. I had no choice. Right now, I couldn't protect all of my body against his attacks.

[Kuk, it's a truly powerful energy, one that can threaten our king... that bastard! Having to follow his commands is painful, so I will kill you here and consume the world's power!]

This time, it was my stomach. Cough. I almost lost control of Overlord, but I clenched my teeth and accelerated the circulation of mana. The Hermit King burst into laughter.

[Kuhahaha! Where is your confidence now? Do you have any more tricks up your sleeve? Use those things you call skills! It is truly laughable, seeing you using the same energy but calling it different names! Kuhaha!]

Right arm, then the shin! After being attacked two more times, I was losing control of Overlord. The power residing in my spear was powerful to say the least, but without a target, it couldn't do anything.

[Are you prepared to die?]

“Kuk... You insect like bastard.”

[Insect... How fitting. For someone struggling like you!]

He's coming! Aiming for my heart!

In that instant, I widened my eyes and used Divine Speed. I activated Sacrifice, strengthened my close-range skill's attack with the Twin-headed Ogre's Tattoo, and used Devourer after confirming that my health had fallen below 10%. At the same time, I neglected all defense and focused the entire rotation of Peruta Circuit into Mad Typhoon. There was only one thing left to do.

I thrust my spear forward. Without shaking in the slightest, the spear jolted forward through the water and stopped suddenly. However, the boundless energy stored in the spear was completely used up. Seeing as how two more impacts resounded, it seemed Trishula's effect was miraculously activated.

[Critical Hit!]

[Cough.]

I coughed up a mouthful of blood. As the blood diffused through the water, I thought I needed to drink a potion if I didn't want to die.

[How did you... know... kuk!]

A giant reaper's scythe appeared in the air, slicing through the empty water before disappearing.

That was it. Once might have been a different story, but after being hit by my all-or-nothing attack thrice and sliced by the reaper's scythe, even a Hermit Emperor much less a Hermit King could survive.

[Grand Raid success!]

Hearing the message noona's cheer, I nodded and murmured.

"That's why I called you an insect."

Just like that, I defeated the world's enemy alone. If I tried it again, I might end up as a beehive, damn it.

Chapter 249. What Happened Twice Will...

(9)

As soon as I realized that the Gaze skill was deactivated, I took out a bottle of Elixir. After drinking about half the bottle, I asked Sharana to bring Lotte to me to have her drink the rest. Even as we were getting emergency treatments, messages continued to flow in.

[Amazing! You completely killed one of the enemies threatening the world alone! You reaped the Hermit King's soul with the reaper's scythe. With the king's soul in possession, all lightning type monsters that invade Earth will have their abilities reduced by 10%! This is a monumental achievement! In addition, you can retrieve the remaining magic power in the Hermit King's body and soul, and turn it into your own.]

[If you receive the Hermit King's power, the Hermit King's corpse will disappear and you will not get any reward for the raid completion. If you destroy the Hermit King's soul, you will obtain the Hermit King's corpse and receive appropriate rewards from the dungeon. What will you do?]

[You obtained the title, 'Ruler of Lightning'! Your affinity to lightning increases greatly. The ability to govern the lightning element has been newly created. Even without mana, you can withdraw lightning from nature and wield it.]

[You obtained 30 stat points and 10 skill points for completing a Grand Raid.]

I thought this would happen. From what I can tell, something like this happened when the reaper's scythe dealt the final blow. Retrieving the Hermit King's power? I pondered over the message.

[Dear Husband! Are you okay?]

“Yeah, I'm fine and so is Lotte! Plene, you can stop singing now!”

[Un!]

When I looked back at my companions, a message window popped up as if to demand my answer.

[What will you do? If you do not decide quickly, the king's soul will be extinguished.]

In truth, I wasn't sure what to do. With its transformation undone, I could see the giant corpse of an electric ray suspended underwater. It was much smaller than when the Hermit King first appeared.

Right, his secret wasn't anything grand. He just had the ability to become extremely big or extremely small. There was one more aspect to this ability.

What made his ability so scary was that he could shrink his presence as if he didn't exist or enlarge it as if he was a terrifying

enemy. Furthermore, regardless of what size he was, his true strength didn't change. When he condensed his enormous lightning power into the size of a flea and attacked with a terrifying speed, even Enigma couldn't defend against it. It was a power fitting of the name Hermit King.

The question was how I noticed him. It was thanks to chaos flames. No matter how small he became, the chaos flames burning inside his eye didn't disappear. How could I not know where my ability was located? I had seen through everything.

However, if he noticed that I had discovered his secret, I would have lost my chance to counterattack perfectly. To attack him in the perfect time, I pretended not to see him and ended up with holes in my body.

Thanks to this, I could accurately time when he would charge towards me, and I gave him the strongest attack I could make. If that wasn't enough, I planned to use Sky God's Rage for the finishing blow, but it was thankfully unnecessary. Trishula's effect and the reaper's scythe had activated with a critical hit.

[What will you do?]

“... Hu.”

The decision was entirely up to me. If I took his corpse and the raid reward, hm... Daisy would receive another powerful undead and I would probably receive a Legend grade item. However, I was more interested in a power that would become mine entirely. Even

if that power was an ability to transform or an ability to hide my presence, that would have its own use. Moreover, the fact that message noona was asking me in the first place suggested that...

“I’ll take the power.”

When I gave my answer, the Hermit King’s corpse began to shrink. I watched with a blank expression until the corpse disappeared completely. In the end, only a blue energy was left floating. It then slowly approached me and was absorbed into me.

[Dear Husband!]

Licorice and Plene, who was approaching me with a relieved look, sped up in shock when they saw what was happening. However, I was already in no situation to explain them the situation. The moment the blue energy was absorbed into me, it resonated with Peruta Circuit and was surging through my body at a terrifying speed.

[You can choose between two titles. The first is ‘Hermit King’, and you will be granted the Hermit King’s Unique ability, ‘World Trickery.’ With this skill, you will be able to freely change your body’s size, form, and presence while maintaining your full strength.]

[The second is offering your title, ‘Rule of Lightning’, to obtain a new title, ‘Lightning God’ With this title, your affinity and dominance over lightning will reach a pinnacle, allowing you to freely create and wield lightning at your desire. You will also not

take any damage from lightning below the EX rank, and you can even wield your enemy's lightning as if it was your own.]

“Of course it's Lightning God! Are you kidding me!?”

How are those two even comparable!? I shouted as if someone was listening. Immediately afterwards, the blue energy in my body transformed into a dazzling golden color. It immediately transformed into a powerful lightning and went berserk as if to burn me alive.

[Master, there's so much energy! This is... Master's...!]

“Huaaaaaaaaaaa!”

Unable to endure the shock, I screamed, echoing underwater. This was like when I obtained a god's power... No, my body was transforming even more than when I obtained a god's power!

[You obtained the title, 'Lightning God'. Your affinity and dominance over lightning has reached the pinnacle. You can wield all lightning under EX rank as if it was your own, and you will not be injured by them.]

[Congratulations! You met one of the conditions to advance to the next realm!]

How long did it take before that message rang out? I had no way of knowing. When I became conscious, Licorice, Lotte, and Plene

were hugging me in a competition of some sort.

[Dear Husband, Dear Husband!]

[Hero, don't die!]

[Snap out, Shin!]

Ruyue and Sharana were also floating around me with worried looks. However, as Peika was in my body the whole time, she didn't seem too worried. I flicked the girls' foreheads and made them back off.

“I'm fine. Stop trying to take off my armor and get back.”

[But I have to check your body! You might be hurt!]

Feeling doubtful at Licorice's choice of words, I notified them that I was at my absolute best condition. Then, I flicked Licorice's forehead one more time. I suddenly became curious if it was Licorice's buff that allowed me to obtain the title of Lightning God. After all, it was thanks to her buff that I obtained the Ruler of Lightning title.

Thus, I changed my mind and pat her head. Although it didn't really work as we were underwater, she seemed to have understood my feelings as her face brightened. She suddenly asked.

[Can I unclothe you?]

“Stop when you’re ahead, please.”

As a test, I ignited lightning with my left hand. It was done without using Peika’s power. Despite us being underwater, golden lightning danced on my palm naturally. I felt an indescribable sense of pleasure.

[Dear Husband... I see, if you obtained a power of this level, it makes sense that you fainted. How is it? Can you handle it?]

“Of course. I feel like...”

I threw the lightning towards the bottom of the Mariana Trench. That single bolt of lightning didn’t lose even the slightest strength as it descended endlessly. Soon, the light it was giving off disappeared and a powerful explosion was felt.

“I can even kill the remaining three kings alone.”

Before we entered the SSS rank Event Dungeon underneath, I notified the rest of the guild members that I took care of the king and that we didn’t need any backup. Some breathed sighs of relief, some cursed, and some laughed as if it was only natural. Leon’s trust in me was too big!

[Nothing less from the guild master. My heart dropped for a second though.]

[Was the king weak?]

“He said he was the weakest.”

[How can he stop us from running away? That’s cheating!]

[If all kings are like that, we’ll have to be extra careful. You said he hid his presence so he couldn’t be discovered?]

I nodded at Hwaya’s question (though she couldn’t see me), and answered.

“It was a strange technique that only the Hermit King could do. The other kings shouldn’t be able to do it. I’m certain so you don’t need to worry. The other kings can’t hide their presence. Their overwhelmingly powerful presence, that is.”

[Yeah, the Lava King was like that, but...]

[Corpse... What about... the beautiful, tough... corpse?]

“There is no such thing.”

[Ah... Kang Shin, I hate you.]

Daisy seemed angry I couldn't acquire the corpse, but I would have made the same choice even if I went back in time. I made a bitter smile and consoled her.

"I'm sure Antarctica has powerful monsters too. I'll find a strong one for you."

[Pinky promise...]

"Yeah, yeah."

At that moment, Yua made a surprising report.

[Oppa, the egg hatched!]

"Really!?"

I was sad I couldn't be there to witness it.

[It's a really cute baby dinosaur!]

"What did you name it?"

Feeling uneasy, I couldn't help but ask. Yua gave a hearty response.

[The name is [Doo—](#)]

“If you didn’t name him yet, what about ‘Ruth’!?”

I cut her off and shouted. Yua corrected me.

[It’s a she. Plus, I already named her.]

“You named a girl Doo— No, nevermind. How about Luna?”

[Oh, that’s a pretty name, Oppa! Then I’ll call her Luna from now!]

Just like that, I made a better future for both Yua and Luna. I had yelled whatever name that came to my mind, but naming a flame dragon’s baby Luna... My naming sense...

[I’m happy Oppa named her, huhu.]

“I’m happy that Yua’s happy. Mostly in the sense of copyright laws.”

[I agree with that, but you two brother and sister need to make some distance.]

[I’m already so far from him! You want me to get even farther! I hate Hwaya Unni!]

[See! In the first place, that's the wrong response! Yua, this Unni will introduce you to a nice boy. How about it?]

[No! I'm going to live with Oppa for the rest of my life! I hate Unni!]

It seemed I had sparked another trouble. As I was scared of both Hwaya and Yua, I decided to ignore them both. Then, I charged straight into the SSS rank dungeon.

Two weeks later, on the 32nd day after leaving Korea, I completely cleaned up the Pacific Ocean and the Oceania and headed to the Antarctic Ocean. Including the stat points from defeating the Hermit King, I had gained 55 bonus stat points. While the Chaotic Spear was at 84% growth.

Chapter 250. Above the Frozen Land (1)

[Wow, Earth has a cool place like this!?]

“This is your first time in Antarctica, Ruyue?”

[Un!]

It's the first for me too.

Of course, the last time Event Dungeons spawned, there were some in Antarctica. However, I was stuck training in Beyond at that time, while Hwaya and the other Revival members had taken care of the Event Dungeons in Antarctica. That's why I didn't have to go all the way to Antarctica last time. It seemed I was paying the price this time as I was even assigned the Antarctica Ocean.

Licorice, Lotte, and Plene were all frowning, while even Peika, who wasn't affected by the environmental effects that much, was feeling uncomfortable. Only Sharana, who lived in a place full of freezing energy, and Ruyue, who was an ice elemental, were happy.

[There's cold wind here, Master!]

[Let's come play here often!]

“Mm, I'll consider it.”

Being an elementalist, it seemed I would have to go on vacations to Antarctica...! Of course, Antarctica's temperature couldn't affect me in the slightest, but what was there to do in Antarctica!? Do I shave off an icy mountain to make shaved ice? I seriously considered making a special facility for Ruyue in Antarctica as I began to clean up the Antarctic Ocean's Event Dungeons.

Most of the Antarctic Ocean's Event Dungeons were deep underwater. Even if I wasn't affected by the cold, being in a below 'zero-degree' freezing water wasn't a particularly pleasant feeling. One positive thing was that monsters seemed to prefer warmth to cold as they weren't often seen in the Antarctic Ocean. As such, we could mostly just focus on clearing Event Dungeons.

[You cleared an SS rank Event Dungeon! You gained 2 bonus stats!]

There was nothing that could stop us, as we breezed through the Antarctic Ocean's Event Dungeons. As there were less Event Dungeons in the ocean than on the continent, we could finish in just ten days. The reason I hoped to finish in ten days was because the eleventh day was the sixth rest day I designated.

When the rest day came, we went to the Residential Area, took baths, and rested our bodies. Even after soaking in a warm bath for three hours, Licorice complained repeatedly.

"The cold in my body hasn't left even now. This is the worst."

“I hate the cold ocean too. There’s nowhere to swim and it’s not a good place to sing in.”

Plene pouted like a duck. I asked Sharana to dry them off as I replied.

“Don’t worry. Once we go to Antarctica, you’ll think the Antarctic Ocean was warm.”

“It’s not a blaze fitting for this Blaze Queen!”

“I followed Dear Husband all the way to this cold place! I’ll get mad if I don’t get rewarded!”

Lotte only complained, but Licorice dug into my arms with only a towel around her. It wasn’t that I didn’t want to spoil her a bit, but I still pushed her away with a wry smile.

“I can’t even do this much? Just a little bit, okay?”

“I have to go the dungeon.”

Licorice who was acting cute frowned at my response and shouted.

“You’re going to meet that woman!”

“If people heard, they’d think that you’re my wife and that I’m going to go cheat on you with someone!”

“It’s the same thing!”

“How!? Plus, I’m not going to meet Loretta, I’m going to enter Beyond.”

“Rather than that, play with me! Dear Husbaaand, please?”

I admired Licorice’s persistence in wanting to spend the rest of the day with me, but I couldn’t concede either.

“There’s an important battle, so I can’t just relax and fool around.”

“Then should we do something more intense, Dear Husband...? I’d love to!”

“No.”

Right, as I had finished grinding the 75th Floor Master today, I had to fight Beyond’s 25th Floor Master today.

“Hero is really different than other men. Strangely different. So different that it’s annoying.”

“Shin is kind and nice!”

“No, that’s not what I’m talking about, stupid.”

“I didn’t want to think this way, but could Dear Husband be impo...”

“Stop there.”

I first grinded the 75th Floor Master in the rest day. I had somewhat expected it when the 71st floor had bats like the 61st floor, but what appeared from the 73rd from onward were vampires. They possessed magic power vastly stronger than succubi or incubi, as they moved extremely quickly while transforming to multiple forms, and aimed for my neck from the most unexpected places. However, the First Dungeon still couldn’t catch up to my level yet, as I still passed with ease through them.

As I had to make time every night while everyone else was asleep to climb the dungeon, it took a few days to climb each floor. Of course, as I needed to wait for the rest days that came once a week to enter Beyond, the fact that it took a few days to climb each First Dungeon floor wasn’t that big of a problem. I broke through floors with Giant Wolves, Wendigos, or both, then made time to beat up the 75th Floor Master, Vampire Lord, during the fifth week.

First, I unfortunately couldn’t get the Vampire Lord Master title. It seemed one of the past Beyond explorers, who were used to defeating Floor Masters solo, had taken the first achievement.

As the solo clear reward was Mistification, I couldn't fathom what the first solo clear reward was. But since the Mistification skill was meaningless to me, I didn't think the higher class version of Mistification would be any more useful. After all, there was no reason for me to turn to mist.

If I was fighting against opponents that couldn't wield mana, transforming into a mist would prevent me from being hit and would even let me move easier than with a solid body, but none of the opponents I faced were unskilled in manipulating mana and I had Divine Speed to speed up my movement, so I didn't need to lighten my body through Mistification. If I used it, I might only end up exposing more weaknesses by becoming more vulnerable to attacks with mana.

Most importantly, if I needed to transform into a mist, I could simply use Sky God's Play. In a way, Sky God's Play was a much higher version of Mistification, and it didn't lower my defense in any way. It was the transformation skill that reigned over all others. Because Sky God's Play guaranteed that I would never be seen through, I didn't really need any other transformation skills.

Of course, it didn't hurt to have more skills. The solo clear rewards were really confusing in some ways. Some skills from lower floors were even better than the skills from higher floors, which meant it wasn't guaranteed that higher floors would have skills any better than Mistification.

On the other hand, the 75th Floor's elixir didn't disappoint me. It was called Vampire Lord's Blood Essence. I felt a bit weird consuming it, but it still raised my constitution and magic by 3

each time. After the tenth elixir, my constitution and magic rose by 30 points each, and my MP broke through 200,000. Even if I used a Heroic Strike that used 50% of my mana, it would have 100,000 points worth of mana condensed into it.

Finally, the Floor Master set skill was called Blood Curse. It was similar to Deathblood Ring's 'blood contamination' in that it used my health to activate. I could hit a target with my blood and decrease all of his stats and make him fall into massive hemorrhage status effect. It was a good debuff skill to have.

When I was about to leave for Beyond after looking through the gains from 75th Floor, Licorice clung to my back and pretended to sob.

“Sob, I’m being neglected by my husband at such a young age and forced to sleep alone.”

“Don’t say that in front of the other girls, okay?”

Especially Yua. I didn’t even want to imagine what would happen if she found out.

“Ei, go already. Hurry back and play with me!”

“I’m going back to sleep. I’m too tired.”

“I’ll also be in the resort area. I know Hero won’t take long.”

I lightly patted Licorice and the others and head to the dungeon. Loretta who was waiting for me on the 75th floor flapped her ears and greeted me happily.

“You came to play with me, right!? Let’s play, let’s play!”

“Is this some new disease going around recently?”

Just how busy was I that everyone started saying this? I swore to wrap up the remaining Event Dungeons as quickly as possible. I wanted to get some rest too.

For now, however, I couldn’t make time just for Loretta. With a bitter smile, I pointed at the gate next to the stairway to the 76th floor.

“Sorry, Loretta. I’ll be back later.”

“Sob, I’m being neglected by my husband at such a young age and forced to...”

“Did you plan this with Licorice!? Now that I think about you, neither of you are that young...!”

Loretta looked up at me with fake tears. She had an axe on one hand.

“Did you say something, Shin-nim?”

“Nothing, Loretta-nim.”

I couldn't die without even seeing the Floor Master's face. I kneeled while facing Loretta's violence then headed to Beyond's 25th floor with tears. Loretta saw me off with a smile, but if I didn't come see her afterwards, I would have to face her wrath.

It seemed I might have to give myself another rest day. Damn, curse my mouth....!

The monster I would face had the combined strong points of Giant Wolves and Wendigos. To be honest, neither Giant Wolves nor Wendigos were difficult opponents to face.

The Giant Wolves in Beyond's 21st floor were bigger than the First Dungeon's Giant Wolf Floor Master, but I had ample experience fighting massive monsters and was an expert in detecting presences. To me, they were nothing more than sandbags. The Wendigos, who just had more powerful freezing energy, were even easier to deal with than the Giant Wolves. They couldn't do anything in front of Ruyue's ability.

Even when I was climbing the First Dungeon, I breezed through the first dungeon 41st to 50th floors. It was the same for Beyond's 21st to 24th floors. It was almost as if someone was being considerate of me since I was busy on Earth. Of course, with Beyond's floors being much bigger than the First Dungeon's floors, I still needed to invest a full day for each floor.

Regardless, Beyond was also... easy!

[Guoooooooo!]

Beyond's 25th floor was a giant snowy mountain similar to the Floor Master room where I fought the Wendigo. There, I met a Skeleton Wolf that was comparable in size to a mountain.

“Each battle rooms are getting bigger... Don't tell me there will be one in the size of a country soon...”

As I leisurely murmured, I swung the spear in my hand and fixed my grip on it. A golden lightning crackled around the speartip, while Ruyue materialized into her beastgirl form and got ready to receive any attacks. Both offense and defense were perfect.

“Let's fight. I'll end this in the blink of an eye.”

[Guooooooooooooooooo!]

Chapter 251. Above the Frozen Land (2)

The giant Skeleton Wolf certainly looked like the fusion of a Giant Wolf and a Wendigo. It emitted freezing energy, was huge, and carried immense power. However, no matter how powerful he was, as long as it was within my expectation, it wasn't of any threat to me.

[Kuaaaaa!]

It was also incredibly fast. Yet, I was faster. Its freezing energy was powerful, but weaker than Ruyue's. It could enlarge its head or front paw, but I didn't allow myself to get hit even once. Compared to the Hermit King who could completely erase his presence, the Skeleton Wolf's presence was just too big.

When it enlarged a part of its body, the energy gathering in that area was too large for me not to notice it. The only way I would be hit is if I purposely let myself be hit. I couldn't even understand why I couldn't notice it in the past.

“This older brother has other things to do today! I don't have time to play around with you! Overlord!”

Since I didn't plan on fighting after this, I used Overlord without hesitation. There was no way Beyond's 25th Floor Master could withstand a power that could kill worlds' enemies. When the Skeleton Wolf saw the energy inside me expanding, it howled.

[Kuoooooooo!]

[Frost Skeleton Wolf's 'Collapsing Roar' rings out. Everything with form begins to collapse. Everything being collapsed will freeze with the Frost Skeleton Wolf's mana and will attack you!]

I see, so this was the reason the Floor Master room was a snowy mountain! After hearing message noona's report, I quickly summoned Sharana, infusing her into me and flying up. The ground below me was the first to collapse, while the peak of the snowy mountain followed suit. Then, controlled by the Frost Skeleton Wolf's mana, they all began to fly towards me. After using Collapsing Roar, the Frost Skeleton Wolf also froze parts of the air and charged towards me in the sky.

Watching everything shooting towards me with intent to kill, I smirked. It was like watching a bigger version of Gaia Buster! With my current stats, even if I couldn't perform the same feat, I would probably be able to do half of what the Skeleton Wolf could do.

Although there wasn't anywhere for me to use Gaia Buster at the moment, once I got back to Antarctica, there would be more than enough land.

“Ruyue, I'll leave the defense to you! Peika, let's go full power!”

[Un!]

[Show that doggy Master's power!]

Ruyue flew up and reached forward towards the incoming boulders of ice. After taking over 20% of my mana, she enclosed them all with her own ice and put them under her control.

Noting that I was safe from attacks, I accelerated in an instant and pointed my golden lightning covered spear towards the Frost Skeleton Wolf. Peika's lightning was heightened by Lightning God's power and mixed with Heroic Aura to transform into a platinum colored lightning. Even after being concentrated into a single point, streaks of lightning crackled outward. Though a bit embarrassing, it was a scene worthy of the name Lightning God.

“You're not strong enough! The height I'm envisioning is higher and farther, the pinnacle of the dungeon!”

[I'll return it to you! Take it!]

At the same time I thrust forward with my spear, Ruyue's shout also rang out. The countless chunks of frozen land and boulders in the air all shot towards the Skeleton Wolf following her command. The Skeleton Wolf could only howl and face them head on, but his howling was beginning to sound like screams.

[You cleared Beyond's 25th floor. You obtained the qualification to challenge the First Dungeon's 76th floor.]

[Your maximum HP and MP increase by 2%. You obtained 5 bonus stats.]

[Experience has been added to skills you frequently used to progress through Beyond's 25th floor.]

[You defeated Beyond's fifth Floor Master, Frost Skeleton Wolf! You obtained the title 'Frost Skeleton Wolf Slayer.' All stats increase by 1.]

[Choose your reward.]

[1. Collapsing Ring.]

[He was weak!]

“Even Beyond's Floor Master is nothing to Ruyue. Amazing.”

[Ehehehe.]

Although Skeleton Wolf was weaker than the Dragon Zombie, its ability to collapse and control land was truly terrifying. If I didn't have my elementals, I might have had more trouble.

Still, to seize the control of those huge boulders... Did the terrain boost Ruyue's ability? In any case, since I knew she had the highest contribution, I praised her wholeheartedly as I patted her. Then, I read the messages I just received.

It somewhat made sense that I wasn't the first to defeat the Frost Skeleton Wolf solo, but I was still surprised. It meant there was

someone else that climbed to Beyond's 25th floor.

The seniors before me, just how far in Beyond did they go? What about in the First Dungeon? What about that man in Beyond's Residential Area? Although I was full of questions, I buried them inside. I knew it was only a matter of time until I found out.

Next, the Collapsing Ring's effect was beyond my expectations. Just like how the Echo Ring from Beyond's Floor Master amplified roar type skills, the Collapsing Ring had a terrifying effect of doubling the range of all skills that crumbled land.

I immediately thought of earthquake magic that magicians used, but what I had was Gaia Buster. I wanted to test it out immediately, but the snowy mountain ruined by the Frost Skeleton Wolf's Collapsing Roar wasn't a place I could stay leisurely. When I left, I saw a completely unexpected customer at the Floor Shop.

“Oh, it's that Hero in Double Crisis.”

“Gek.”

“Hold on, what's up with that sound like a frog that just got stepped on with a high-heel?”

“Oh, Shin-nim. That was really fast.”

The one talking to Loretta was none other than Eleine, Lost

Valley's master. As the last talk I had about her wasn't particularly joyful, it felt awkward seeing her face. I silently looked at Loretta, asking her with my face why she was here.

"Ah, she said she had to talk about work. I didn't know when Shin-nim would return, so I couldn't leave the Floor Shop."

"You should do things in moderation, Loretta. If you fall too deep, you won't know how to climb back up."

"Be quiet before you fall too deep to climb back, Eleine."

Eleine pouted and went silent. With a wry smile, I waved goodbye and was about to leave when Loretta stopped me.

"I'll be done soon, so stay and play with me, please?"

"If an administrative guild master came all the way to discuss something, it can't be simple. I'll come back later, we can play then."

Eleine nodded seriously while still staying quiet. Loretta glared at Eleine with killing intent, but in the end, she sighed and took out an axe from the... Wait, that wasn't a sigh of resignation!?

Eleine, who didn't notice Loretta's axe, suddenly looked at me with sparkling eyes. When I was wondering what was up, she spoke rather unexpected words.

“Hero, I already heard you defeated two worlds’ enemies! Then can you take care of our business too?”

Before I could respond, Loretta fixed her grip on her axe and spoke.

“Eleine... Cut it out.”

“Isn’t it natural to give quests to qualified explorers? That’s the administrative guild members’ job.”

“But he’s already busy! If you keep bothering my Shin-nim, I’ll make you regret it!”

Even after hearing Loretta’s threat, Eleine continued to look at me with great interest. I shook my head with a wry smile.

“Sorry, but I can’t right now. There are too many things I have to do on Earth.”

“Really? We still have some time so contact me when you’re done with... Hiik!”

Loretta’s giant axe struck the dungeon floor, making a thunder roar that rang out with Eleine’s shriek.

“L-Loretta, are you really doing this!?”

“Shin-nim, I’m sorry but we’ll have to play later. I have something else to take care of now.”

“Uh, mm... Okay. Try to avoid murder, Loretta.”

At my advice, Loretta retorted lightly, as if she was about to catch an annoying mosquito flying around in the room.

“I’ll consider it.”

“Hey, Hero! You’re running away! I’ll get my revenge!”

“Loretta, I won’t mind even if Loretta becomes a criminal. Just saying.”

“Yes, Shin-nim! I understand!”

“Hero, you! That’s assisting murder! A crime! Hey!”

With that, I safely escaped from Loretta and Eleine.

“Strange. Really strange.”

Licorice looked uncomfortable during the entire time we were exploring Antarctica.

“I had fun with Dear Husband, but why doesn’t it feel like it? Why?”

“I’m sure it’s just your imagination. Maybe you’ll change your mind once we clear a dungeon.”

“No, it must be because it wasn’t enough. In that case, I have to spend more time with Dear Husband.”

[Stop spouting nonsense and look in front of you, bat.]

“Eek, this birdbrain...!”

Licorice glared at Lotte and gritted her teeth. However, Lotte was right. Even though we could travel quickly on Lotte’s back, it wasn’t easy to find Event Dungeons in this huge continent. Licorice, who had the result of the succubi’s exploration in her head, needed to focus for us to finish exploring Antarctica quickly.

“Even Dear Husband... I feel like I’m just a map.”

“Do your best for a little longer, Licorice. When we’re done, I’ll reward you.”

“If that’s what Dear Husband says...”

Licorice complained a little and closed her eyes to focus on the database in her head. Then, she ordered Lotte to turn to the right

and fly straight.

When we arrived at a certain point, she faced a giant glacier and tilted her head. Then, she closed her eyes again before opening them back up.

“Dear Husband.”

“Hm?”

What she said next surprised me greatly.

“The dungeon that was here, I think it was cleared already.”

Chapter 252. Above the Frozen Land (3)

Her words made me freeze up for a moment. After thinking to myself for a bit, I calmly replied.

“Impossible!”

Well... Maybe I wasn't so calm.

“I'm the only one from Revival that came here, right?”

“Un. Our kids are with the others, so I should know if they did.”

That could only mean that someone else had come here and cleared the dungeon. I asked Licorice.

“What was the dungeon's rank here?”

“Antarctica's Event Dungeons are generally high ranked. This one was SS.”

If it was an SS rank Event Dungeon, no one else other than Revival's members and the explorers we appointed would have dared to attempt it. Something outside of my knowledge had happened.

I felt stifled all of a sudden. Now that I was a leader of a group, knowing that something outside of my knowledge had happened

made me uncomfortable. In the past, when the only thing I cared about was training my spearmanship, I didn't care about anything else. Of course, I also didn't know what was happening in the world either.

Now, however, countless possibilities were emerging in my head, tormenting me. Now that I had more things to protect, I was worrying about things that didn't even happen to me directly. No matter what danger came up, as long as it was in front of me, I could just beat it up...!

“There isn't even a trace of mana left. Amazing.”

Licorice flew around the glacier and investigated. The result only made me more worried.

“We can't just be impressed. We don't know whether the perpetrator is an ally or an enemy.”

“Don't worry, Dear Husband. Our kids are with the others, so we should know if anything happens to them.”

“Right... Hopefully, we'll find out in Antarctica.”

I clenched my fists. Golden lightning automatically appeared and crackled around them. If the perpetrator was an ally, if he was a new powerful ability user, that would be the best...

“But if the perpetrator is someone with ill intentions...”

“Dear Husband, that face is too cool! The perpetrator will fall for Dear Husband too!”

“No, I’m done with girls...”

As Licorice said, Antarctica’s Event Dungeons were fairly high in difficulty. Of course, being fairly high didn’t mean a thing for someone like me, who had three gods’ true names and the power of Lightning God. But it was still worrying that the number of Event Dungeons was lower than the number the succubi units gave initially.

Two weeks passed since we started exploring Antarctica. It was good that we cleared about thirty Event Dungeons, but about the same number of Event Dungeons had disappeared as if they never existed. It meant they had been cleared by someone else.

What was even stranger was that the cleared dungeons were all over the place. If the perpetrator wanted to just clear the dungeons, wouldn’t he have wanted to clear all of them? However, even though there were dungeons closer to the ones he cleared, the perpetrator traveled far to clear other Event Dungeons. This meant the perpetrator had a standard of some sort in choosing the Event Dungeons to clear.

Was it difficulty? After all, none of the A ranked dungeons were cleared. After thinking about it for a bit, I shook my head. Although that might be it, there were some SS ranked dungeons amongst the ones I cleared. There had to be something other than

just difficulty.

However, even dungeon explorers only knew Event Dungeons' difficulties and names before entering them. Did that mean the perpetrator knew more about the dungeons before entering them?

[We're the only ones.]

[Right. How about contacting Guardian or Freedom Wing? Oh, you already did.]

[Shin, if you need help, just call us!]

Thankfully, the other teams seemed to have had no problems. Feeling a bit relieved, I rushed to finish off the other Event Dungeons. Licorice and the others also followed me quietly, they must have been much colder than when we were in the Antarctic Ocean. I vowed to thank them somehow when everything was over. Of course, I didn't say anything aloud since I knew they would try to push for more.

Ten days afterwards, a week earlier than the two month time I had set initially, we completely cleaned up Antarctica. It was because we only had to clear half the number of dungeons we expected. The other teams were also finishing up, and the words 'Revival' and 'dungeon' could be seen everywhere on news.

"I'm finally free from this cold place! Huhu, I was half doubtful, but Dear Husband really closed all pathways. Dear Husband is

really amazing!”

[Ha, the ones who picked a fight in Hero’s home are the foolish ones.]

“That’s you, birdbrain.’

[I’m with Hero now!]

I thought Licorice and Lotte’s relationship would get better after staying together for so long, but they were still on bad terms. At least in the past, Licorice was a lot stronger than Lotte, but ever since Lotte evolved into a Blaze Queen, the power balance between the two evened out and their fights became worse. They listened when I stopped them, but soon enough, they quickly broke out into another fight. I didn’t understand why they couldn’t just get along. I patted Plene, who was smiling happily without a care in the world.

“Plene is the best.”

[I like getting patted. I like Shin! More than apple pies!]

Uk. Now that she mentioned it, I haven’t given her an apple pie in a long time. Maybe I should hire a baker soon... I smiled bitterly as I thought about that. Suddenly, Licorice, who was about to start brawling with Lotte, tilted her head.

“Dear Husband, Australia...”

“Didn’t we already finish there?”

“Australia got taken over by monsters...?”

“What...!?”

Why do things never end nicely!? I gritted my teeth and opened the communication channel. As always, Hwaya was the first to report.

[Shin, Oceania was completely taken over by monsters!]

[Not just Australia? That’s impossible. I cleared all the Event Dungeons there!]

[Maybe you missed one? This dungeon was also much bigger than we thought. When it became a Field Dungeon, it...]

I interrupted Hwaya.

[That can’t be. Also, Event Dungeons should transform into Field Dungeons at the same time.]

[Uuu, I don’t understand. I can’t contact most of the countries in Oceania. Not even their Guardians or Freedom Wings! It’s almost like the entire area is isolated! What do we do, Shin? What if the Demon Lord is here?]

[He shouldn't be, don't worry. I know the Demon Lord's aura. It's not him. I should be the closest one to Oceania. Since I just finished in Antarctica, I'll head over there.]

[... My team, done today. I'll join, Kang Shin.]

[M-My team is finishing soon too! I'll go as soon as I can!]

Daisy and Ye-Eun quickly added. As I was feeling pressured by the sudden monster takeover, I couldn't be more thankful to them.

[But don't push yourselves too much. It's more important that we don't miss any Event Dungeons.]

[Shin is the one pushing yourself too much! You already had the most work... Shin, don't go by yourself. My team should be done tomorrow, so wait for us, okay? Don't be impatient and just wait, got it?]

I only told them not to push themselves and Hwaya was worrying about me. I had always thought this, but Hwaya had somewhat of a motherly side to her. When she has kids, I felt like they would have a hard time dealing with her nagging. Though, she would still be an excellent mother.

I replied with a smile.

[Yes, ma'am. I won't do anything rash.]

[Uuu, I'm happy you're listening, but I don't like the way you replied...]

[Damn it, how are you guys so fast? My team can only barely finish in time!]

Walker was complaining. Although he obtained a curse ability and reached Gold rank in the Second Dungeon, he was still a bit lacking compared to the other powerful members. Although he had other team members, having one absolute power was extremely helpful in clearing high ranking dungeons. Hwaya retorted generously.

[I'll send you the explorers from my team. They've gotten more useful over the two months.]

[Thanks, friend. I want to be more helpful, but the Americas are too big!]

[You're doing well, Leon. I'll take care of Oceania so don't worry.]

[Of course, I don't doubt it! Hahaha!]

[I want to help Daddy too! I finished Russia. I'll go see Daddy!]

[Yeah, Ina. Let's go with Mommy. Alright, Shin. I'll see you tomorrow. Get some rest... You must have been constantly running around until now. Sorry.]

[See you tomorrow. I'm fine, so don't worry about it.]

With that, I closed the communication channel. Feeling more calmed, I sighed and looked back at Licorice.

“Is there anything new?”

“There's nothing. It's really as if the region is isolated from the rest of Earth. We're getting some satellite images... Hold on.”

Licorice took out a crystal ball and put her fingers on it. Soon, several pictures popped up. I became speechless as I stared into the crystal ball. The region... was freezing up.

“Licorice.”

“Yeah, I think so too.”

There was no doubt about it. The person who cleared Antarctica's Event Dungeons, no, at this point, it was doubtful whether the perpetrator really cleared the Event Dungeons. That person and the Oceania had to be related.

Lotte called me.

[Hero, look.]

We were currently flying back after clearing Antarctica's Event Dungeons. In the first place we arrived when we reached Antarctica from the Antarctic Ocean, a clear trace was left.

“Could it be...”

“We can't be sure, but probably.”

Licorice looked at the trace left behind by the perpetrator. A bountiful trace of mana and a huge chunk of land torn away through brute force.

“Dear Husband, it's the demon race.”

The time for war was near.

Chapter 253. Above the Frozen Land (4)

I knew too well how much the land had changed. It was the place we had landed. The shape of the continent had most certainly changed. Seeing the coastline cut unnaturally, I felt a chill going down my spine.

“The perpetrator has enough power to change the landscape?”

“No, Dear Husband. The perpetrator only shaved off the top layer, like scooping ice cream from a bucket. We should be able to deal with this much!”

“I’m not trying to compete...”

Licorice was right. There was a gradual slope down to the ocean, allowing seawater to flow in. It was certainly something I could do too, though I would need to use quite a bit of my aura.

Even so, the fact that the perpetrator used so much energy to accomplish this made me uneasy. He had to have a reason for doing that. I pondered for a moment, and suddenly thought of something.

“Could it be... Licorice.”

“Yes.”

It seemed she was thinking the same thing. She projected the satellite pictures onto her crystal ball again and zoomed in. When we saw the land, the frozen parts were all connected to the coast. There had to be a starting point where the freezing began.

The answer was quickly found. If someone completely unknowledgeable saw it, he would only think of it as a giant glacier. This giant glacier was the thing clashing with the coast, and that was where the invasion was beginning. That giant glacier was undoubtedly the cut off part of Antarctica.

“Now we know for sure.”

“Un.”

A ship. The perpetrator had sliced off a part of Antarctica to use as a ship. Being able to slice off such a huge chunk of land showed just how powerful the perpetrator was. At the same time, it most likely meant that he wasn't alone. He most likely had an army with him.

“He crossed over to Earth recently. If he was alone, it could be that he crossed over long ago and was hiding this entire time, but since he has an army, it makes more sense that he crossed over recently with his army. But... How did he time his invasion with the Event Dungeons?”

I didn't know how Event Dungeons were created. From what I know about the worlds' enemies, I know that they use 'pathways' to periodically send their armies to Earth, and that the dungeon

traps them in Event Dungeons so that humanity doesn't have to fight them at the same time, and encourages explorers to clear them for item and stat rewards.

One thing to note was that during the second wave of Event Dungeons, I encountered a demon race in the last Event Dungeon I cleared. It meant both monsters and demons became trapped in Event Dungeons when they crossed over without exception. But what about this time? Did I encounter any demons in the Event Dungeons I cleared?

“No, I didn't.”

I shook my head. I couldn't believe I only noticed it now. In that case, the answer was even simpler. Disappearing Event Dungeons and the appearance of the Demon Lord's army. It could only mean one thing.

“The Event Dungeons didn't disappear... Someone had the power to take demons out of Event Dungeons. As if they had everything planned, they gathered in one place and started conquering Oceania...”

“Then the reason all the disappeared Event Dungeons were in Antarctica was...”

“Yeah. They could probably control that too.”

I was dumbfounded. If our assumption was correct, the demons

were practically playing around with the dungeon's system. Either the dungeon's restraint lost its meaning, or half of it was rendered useless. Was it because they already have a world's power? I couldn't be sure.

“Sorry, I’m going to go see Loretta for a bit. Go rest in the Residential Area.”

“Un.”

I hurriedly entered the dungeon. Loretta greeted me happily, but her expression turned grave when I told her my thoughts.

“That’s impossible. That would be the same as challenging the Lord’s power directly. That oldie might be annoying, but certainly powerful!”

“But this is what happened.”

“Uuu. But... Mm...”

Loretta shot up and began to circle around me. Then, she began to murmur to herself. It was a bit scary, but I let her be.

Soon, she nodded as if she came to a decision. She turned to face me.

“Shin-nim, try to resist this.”

“Huh?”

“Resist it, okay? Though, I would be happy even if Shin-nim didn’t... Kuhum! Anyways, try resisting it!”

Loretta didn’t wait for my answer and closed her eyes. When she opened them back up, the particles of light freely floating in her golden eyes suddenly began to let out a dazzling light.

Loretta was too beautiful.

For a moment, my heart thumped and obscene thoughts crossed my mind. I knew I liked Loretta, but this urge...!

“Lo... retta?”

“Good, just like that... No, that’s not right!”

I knew of Loretta’s beauty all too well, but its current destructive ability was beyond my imagination. What happened? I thought I was old enough to be disciplined! Unable to control my desire, I slowly approached Loretta. Suddenly, I felt terrified. I felt like I was being sucked in by Loretta’s charm, unable to maintain my own will. I felt scared that I was going to lose myself.

In the end, before I attacked Loretta, I instinctively poured mana into my Evil Eyes and released the charm I had kept hidden. It was

common sense that high charm countered another person's high charm. Slowly, my consciousness began to return. Loretta was still blindingly beautiful, but I was no longer feeling the same uncontrollable urge.

As if she didn't want to lose, Loretta bit her lips and strengthened the power in her eyes. However, I also roused my charm and resisted her. At the same time, I understood somewhat that this was the power of Loretta's Evil Eyes. Evil Eyes that can threaten my high charm, as I thought, Loretta's ability was beyond my imagination...

“Just how high are you going to go!?”

“Ow!”

Realizing that Loretta's eyes were sparkling to a dangerous point, I smacked her head. Loretta then finally released her Evil Eyes and rubbed her head in pain.

“Hiing, Shin-nim just wouldn't come over.”

“You're the one who told me to resist it.”

“I got angry because Shin-nim resisted it too well! If I were Shin-nim, I would have taken the opportunity to attack me!”

“Is that what you were hoping for?”

“Yes!”

As always, Loretta didn't hide her intentions. Dumbfounded, I smacked her head again. Loretta pouted like a duck.

“I wasn't sure Shin-nim could really resist it. Uuuu, why did the Lord have to put mares in the dungeon to have Shin-nim's resistance rise!?”

“Do you really need me to answer that...”

When I retorted, still dumbfounded, Loretta moaned with a vexed expression.

“It's been three hundred years since my Evil Eyes of Charm got blocked. Well, it was also the first time it was activated in three hundred years...”

“So they really were charm type Evil Eyes.”

The Evil Eyes I've seen until now were all beautiful, but Loretta's were especially beautiful. It made sense if her Evil Eyes were Evil Eyes of Charm.

“Yes. Shin-nim has the qualification to meet the Lord, and I just proved Shin-nim won't be charmed when meeting the Lord, so there's no problem. Meet and ask the Lord directly. That will be

the most definite way.”

I see. It seemed she used her Evil Eyes on me in case I got charmed by the Lord. In that case, the Lord must also be a woman whose charm was on a similar level to Loretta’s Evil Eyes of Charm.

Of course, I wasn’t looking forward to it at all. It wasn’t just because Loretta was taking her axes out.

“That makes sense, but...”

“I can go ask for you, but Shin-nim’s free, right? This is a good chance to talk to her. Come on, let’s go.”

“Okay.”

I had no reason to refuse. I was also curious about this Lord person. If I could meet her in person, I would love to do so.

“First, we’ll go to Fairy Garden. Then, I’ll open a road to where the Lord is.”

At Fairy Garden, I met Lokanyan who was playing with the elementals. She was like a cat chasing after butterflies. As a cat would, Lokanyan detected our prescence and turned around to face us.

“Ah, Master nyan!”

“Where’s Lin?”

“Lin’s been making something. He won’t be with Loka nyan...”

Loka half-folded her cat ears with a dejected look. I flinched. What Lin was making was undoubtedly the accessories for Daisy and me. Loretta laughed and patted Lokanyan’s head.

“Lin is atoning for his mistakes by doing work. Just wait a bit, Loka. He won’t take too long.”

“Got it, nyan. Master is really kind, nyan!”

I wonder if she’d smile when she knew Loretta was the one who gave him that punishment. Since I didn’t want to pour water on a good scene, I stayed silent. Loretta dusted off Lokanyan with mana and advised her.

“When your stomach gets big, you can’t run around like now. It’s not good for your child.”

“Got it, nyan! But how does Master know so much when Master’s never been pregnant or even slept with a guy, nyan?”

“... Huhu, I have my ways.”

“Master is really amazing, nyan!”

“Huhuhu.”

I felt like Lin’s punishment increased by at least a month. I didn’t even want to approach Loretta because her smile was so scary.

“Let’s go, Shin-nim.”

“Yeah.”

Loretta held my hand and walked away. When Lokanyan disappeared from our view, she glared at me.

“Half of it is Shin-nim’s fault.”

“No way, only one out of two thousand seven hundredth is my fault.”

“Shin-nim...?”

“Come on, let’s hurry!”

The Fairy Garden wasn’t just an administrative guild area, but a rather mystical place. Just by walking while thinking about the person you want to meet, you would be able to meet her. It was a place far out of human realm’s laws, a place ruled by mystical laws.

“Don’t let go of my hand and if possible, don’t think about anything.”

“Got it.”

Loretta warned me and grabbed my hand. Then, we began to walk step by step into the empty forest. With just that, the surrounding scenery began to change. From a forest to a meadow, from a meadow to a barren wilderness, from a wilderness to a hill, the sceneries changed as if we were teleporting from place to place. Soon, everything disappeared and we came to an area enshrouded in darkness.

If there was even a single star, I might have thought we were under a night sky. If there wasn’t a sense of vastness that made me certain the darkness expanded out endlessly, I might have thought we were in a dark room. Of course, neither was the case. At least, I knew we weren’t in Fairy Garden. Using Loretta’s existence as a key and using Fairy Garden as a door, we had arrived here. It was just like how I entered Fairy Garden through the pond in my mansion.

This place wasn’t connected to any other places and existed independently. It wasn’t a place one could enter just by wanting to enter or leave just by wanting to leave.

“Where are we...?”

“It’s the oldie’s taste.”

“Oldie? How rude, Loretta.”

The moment Loretta mentioned her, a calm mature voice of a woman rebutted her. I instinctively turned to the direction of the voice. It was undoubtedly the first time I had heard this voice, but for some reason, I felt a sense of familiarity. While I was enveloped in this strange sensation, the Lord greeted me with a smile.

“This is the first time we’ve met. I’m Sherifina, in charge of the dungeon’s administrations. Everyone calls me Lord, but you always called me something else.”

When I heard her voice again, I realized whom it belonged to.

“Message noona! ... Noona?”

In the empty darkness, message noona, or rather Sherifina, who greeted us... was a small girl perhaps even smaller than Ina.

Chapter 254. Above the Frozen Land (5)

While being Confused, I examined her more closely. She had long plum-colored hair that seemed to want to melt into the surrounding darkness, and also pale white skin. Her slightly out of focus eyes were plum-colored just like her hair and seemed to suck in all light. Not only was she small, her eyes, lips, and ears were also small. Anyone looking at her would only see a ten year old girl.

Ah, she also wasn't wearing any clothes.

“Shin-nim, do you have anything to say before I poke your eyes out?”

“I'm innocent. I'm being falsely accused. If you wish to find fault, go talk to that exhibitionist kid.”

“Sometimes, just being somewhere constitutes a crime. When you realized she was naked, you should have turned around!”

“I was expecting a grown woman because of her mature voice. I was surprised she was a kid and was examining her. I acknowledge my fault in this, but poking my eyes out would be too excessive of a punishment.”

As I replied calmly and blocked Loretta's fingers desperately, Sherafina watched us silently. Go wear something, please!

“Lord, wear something!”

“So that was the problem. I apologize, I rarely talk to people.”

She apologized to Loretta and snapped her fingers. In an instant, she was equipped with a black dress. I pushed Loretta’s fingers away and sighed a breath of relief. At the same time, I couldn’t help but think, was she wearing underwear...? Kuhum!

“I put on some clothes now, Loretta. There’s no reason to poke his eyes out.”

“Hu... You did this on purpose, right?”

“Loretta should know very well that I don’t usually wear clothes.”

“Mm... I’ll question you later. You know why we’re here, right?”

“Yes, it’s about what happened on Earth, correct?”

Sherafina slowly nodded and continued.

“Earth is perfectly defending against its invaders. If you continue to grow, it might be possible to stop Earth’s enemies before humanity sheds blood.”

“I already know that, but...”

“However, they realized that you were powerful.”

Sherafina looked at me. Seeing her mysteriously charming plum eyes, I could see why Loretta tested me beforehand. Loretta spoke up.

“If Lord seduces Shin-nim, I’ll kill even Lord.”

“I have no such intentions. Plus, love isn’t good for administrators. Loretta, I already told you multiple times, not that you ever listen to me.”

“If Lord talks about someone else, I’ll kill even Lord.”

“Your love troubles both you and your love’s receiver. Your expectations are too high.”

Loretta took out her axe.

“I’ll just kill her now.”

“Loretta, please!”

“But that woman just...! Shin-nim, are my expectations too high? Am I overbearing?”

“You’re not at all, so put away that axe before I do feel that way! Where the heck is that axe coming out of all the time!?”

As I thought, I’m the only normal one out of everyone related to the dungeon! Even this woman didn’t listen to people properly! After I barely stopped the biggest crisis since the dungeon’s founding, Sherafina spoke with a sigh.

“Accelerating the speed of invasion isn’t something they would prefer to do because of its high mana cost...”

“You’re continuing like nothing happened!?”

“Rather than succeeding in their invasion, they’re losing the territories they already gained. In response, they sacrificed some of their forces to widen the pathway.”

I gave up and just listened to her.

“Originally, I distributed my power evenly amongst all worlds, administering the dungeon, administering its explorers, and interfering with the enemies’ invasions.”

“Yes, yes.”

“Because of the recent incident with Sipua ran away... Ah, thank you for that by the way. We were able to protect the dungeon

thanks to you. Even If we lost just Lin, the dungeon would have been in deep trouble.”

“Just continue with the explanation, Lord.”

Loretta spoke while annoyed. Sherafina nodded and continued.

“Because of the recent incident with Sipua running away, the dungeon had stopped. My sight also became limited. Sipua was returned to her position, but before my power came back, the enemy’s third invasion began. We were struck at an untimely spot.”

“Then, is my theory correct, Lord?”

“yes. The dungeon’s formation wasn’t perfect. In addition, because I quickly reactivated my power, I didn’t notice them gathering in the same spot. Since I didn’t notice the Event Dungeons disappearing and the enemies gathering together in an army, you could say they tricked me completely. At the very least, it means they have an ability that prevents me from finding out when Event Dungeons disappear.”

“Impossible!”

“Our enemy is diverse and possess fearful abilities. Loretta, what we consider impossible will always come back to bite us in reality.”

The Lord spoke calmly.

“Remember this. There might be someone in their midst who can perfectly see through the nature of my power and can completely ignore it.”

“Could it be the Demon Lord?”

“I don’t think so. When the final explorer left the Luka continent, he didn’t possess such a power. It must be a new demon born after the Demon Lord obtained the world’s power.”

Although she had a serious tone, I couldn’t focus on her words entirely because of her young appearance. I slapped my cheeks to regain my composure and asked her.

“And there might be more than one such being.”

“Exactly. I plan on doing everything I can, but what the dungeon can do for you will become less and less.”

“Lord, you’re too irresponsible!”

“I have high expectation of you.”

She pretended to have not heard Loretta as she looked at me fixedly.

“You might not know, but you’re the fastest climbing explorer to

have ever existed. Soloing the dungeon, something that you consider normal and easy, is something not even 1% of the explorers can accomplish. The feat of climbing two floors in a day is something not even 1% of that 1% can do. As for your Beyond climbing speed, I have no words. Your strength and bold mindset and the heavenly luck that supports you are something even I find hard to believe. The interest and goodwill towards you by the gods are most likely the first since the universe's beginning."

"Ehehe, you're making me blush."

"Why are you feeling embarrassed, Loretta?"

She tilted her head at Loretta's response, then turned to face me again.

"However, the more accomplished you become, the more uneasy I feel. I hate the word 'fate' the most, but looking at your talent and luck, I can't help but think it's because a time when such a power is needed is coming."

"Lord?"

Loretta looked at Sherafina with an extremely surprised face. Seeing the streak of worry on the girl's small face, she asked.

"Uneasy...? Why? Lord saw and experienced countless worlds' ruin, and you're feeling uneasy at Earth's danger?"

“Think about the situation Earth is in, Loretta.”

I could somewhat understand the uneasiness Sherafina was feeling. Loretta seemed to know something too as she became quiet.

“The enemies’ leaders have the power to ignore the dungeon’s power. That’s partly why they became leaders. It makes sense. The dungeon was made by the defenders, and the leaders of the attackers were born to defeat the defenders.”

“Is that so?”

“But what’s happening right now is too out of line. The Demon Lord who opened a pathway to another world after absorbing a world’s power and the fact that this pathway led to Earth, both of these are something I can’t just wave off. It’s the same for the leader of the monsters, as I am clueless as to what kind of an existence he is. If you fail to protect Earth and they succeed, will they stop there?”

“...”

Loretta and I both became speechless. I didn’t want to even imagine the end of Earth, but if Earth’s invaders started to reach out to other worlds, just how many would be able to defend themselves? The Lord interrupted our silence and continued ruthlessly.

“The danger Earth is facing can be fatal. You must stop them. If you allow them land, we won’t know what they will do next. They must be chased out. Furthermore, you must get stronger.”

“Of course.”

“You’re walking on the correct path. Grow stronger. Climb the dungeon, but don’t become swayed by it. Just like what you’re doing now, grow power that the dungeon can’t give. Also...”

I felt like I didn’t want to hear the next part. Just when I was about to block my ears out of instinct, the Lord announced.

“You must embrace the human named Ciara Kenex.”

“I’d rather die...”

She continued, as if she expected my response.

“Just like you, she is someone who received the world’s power. If you are the Hero, she would be the Saintess. Both are indispensable existences for Earth. Seeing Earth’s current situation, I now understand why she exists. You need someone to read the enemy’s movements. You need her, who was born with an ability that the dungeon can’t give.”

“Please... Uuu, so you’re saying...”

I was about to refuse her straight up, but I hesitated for a moment. I hated her. I hated her personality, and I hated that she admired me just because I was the Hero. I hated her appearance and hated her voice. I hated everything about her. I was sick of her attitude of treating people's lives as mere numbers.

But what if I pushed her away just because I hated her personality and action, and ended up with casualties that I could have prevented with her power?

If included in those casualties was Yua, Ina, Mother, Father, Ina, Hwaya, Ye-Eun, Yua, Ludia, Ina, Daisy, Ren, Yua, Leon, Ina, Walker, Yua, or Ina...

“She can become stronger in the dungeon. By raising her league, she can strengthen the power she was given. Now, you need her power.”

“... Uuu.”

I had too many people I needed to protect. I always talked big about protecting everyone with my strength alone, but I knew all too well now that I couldn't solve everything on my own.

To protect my loved ones...

“Huu... I'll contact her.”

Will I be able to rein her in? Hwaya might be able to do it, but

won't she get mad? I sighed thinking about having to see Ciara Kenex's face. Loretta was also giving the Lord a deathly glare.

“I'm already annoyed by the number of women Shin-nim has, so why are you giving him another one!?”

“Then will Loretta go to Earth to help him?”

“... Can I?”

“Absolutely not. You should know this better than anyone else.”

Loretta pouted at Sherafina's cutthroat answer. Sherafina continued without batting an eye.

“Is having one more woman more important than his safety?”

“I don't know! Shin-nim, let's go back. I shouldn't have brought you here, hmph!”

“Eh? We're going back?”

“We already got what we came for! Lord, do you have anything else to say?”

“I want to give more help, but unfortunately...”

She shook her head. It was the kind of gesture fitting of the word ‘oldie’, but since I knew women were sensitive about talking about their age, I wasn’t so stupid as to ask about her age.

“I hope you can pass this danger safely. I’ll look forward to the day I meet you again.”

“I won’t bring Shin-nim here ever again!”

Loretta shouted at her and pulled me away. I bowed to Sherafina and followed her. Just like when I first came here, she spoke as she pulled me.

“Shin-nim will do fine. Don’t worry too much. The dungeon is all the Lord has in her mind. She’s ignoring Shin-nim’s potential. I’m angry.”

“No, I don’t think she did... Rather than that, what is she? She doesn’t seem human.”

“I don’t know either. She hasn’t changed at all since I first met her.”

Loretta added with a bitter smile.

“She never says anything about herself. It’s been several hund... a long time since I saw her too.”

She cut off contact with people and lived two thousands years or even more in that darkness? I thought about the conversation I just had. Sherafina seemed to have had expressed emotions somewhat, but when I thought about it, she didn't say anything not related to the dungeon. Just why did she spend such a long time... I knew I didn't have the time to worry about other things, but I couldn't help but think about her. When I sighed, Loretta looked at me with worrying eyes.

“You're not interested in her, right? I thought you resisted her charm, but could it be...”

“Loretta's the only one for me.”

“Aaaaah! Wait! I'm not ready to record that! Again, say it again one more time!”

“It's embarrassing, so no.”

“Shin-niiiiim!”

I wasn't in any position to worry about other people. I had to fight the demons who tricked the Dungeon Lord's eyes and conquered Oceania. I had to clear my head for battle.

About contacting Ciara, I'll put it off until the fight ends. After all, just listening to her will ruin my mood!

Chapter 255. Above the Frozen Land (6)

A day had passed since Oceania was taken over by the demon race and became isolated from all outside contact. For some reason, the internet also didn't work. It was really as if Oceania was cut off from the rest of Earth and placed in the medieval age.

No matter how powerful Revival's members were, we couldn't just say we would take care of everything by ourselves when the real invasion began. As such, we contacted several governments and divided the areas we would manage. We told them that we would go in once all of Revival's members were gathered, and we advised them to form elite troops formed of ability users of at least S rank. The rest would be up to them.

As it wasn't efficient for everyone to come to the Antarctic Ocean, we decided to meet in the middle, the Pacific Ocean. No matter how grave the situation with Oceania was, we couldn't give up on clearing the other Event Dungeons.

The ones ready today were Daisy, Father, Ye-Eun, Hwaya, Ina, Michel, and Ilayda. The others still had several dungeons they needed to clear and couldn't come.

[Good luck, Oppa. I'll come as soon as I finish up with my area!]

[With your ability, you'll be done before me anyways. Don't force us to try harder and take care of it on your own... Good luck.]

[You can do it, Shin-nim!]

[I know I don't need to worry about Crown Prince, but still, please be on guard. Being careless is the easiest way to die.]

[... It's good that there's a substitute priestess. You were right, Shin.]

[I don't know if I'm good enough to substitute for Palludia-nim, but I'll try my best!]

What surprised me the most was Ludia acquiescing. The past Ludia would have told Ilayda to take her place so that she could come with me. She really has gotten better. No, perhaps, she just evolved into her final form... Even so, I welcomed her transformation.

[I'll clear the Event Dungeons as quickly as I can too. Just wait a few days, Shin.]

[Your safety should always come first, Ludia. Be careful.]

[Yeah, thanks.]

I ended my conversation with Ludia somewhat awkwardly. Then, I cheered up the other members and closed the communication channel before rowing my boat to join the other attacking members.

This “boat” was a giant sheet of ice that Ruyue and Sharana made with their abilities. With a diameter of one kilometer and thickness of several meters, it was more of a tiny piece of land than a sheet of ice. It was also extremely firm. Since it was made with 200,000 mana, it would be weird otherwise.

“Dear Husband, are you still strengthening it?”

“Of course. I wonder why I only thought of this now.”

I gulped down a mana potion as I replied to Licorice. Anyone next to me would be able to hear the sound of Peruta Circuit spinning as I gathered mana fiercely and poured it to Ruyue and Sharana. Sharana, who was piloting this giant sheet of ice like a boat, strengthened the ice as she received more mana, and Ruyue made the sheet bigger and harder by freezing the water.

“Dear Husband... Why are you making it so big? It’s going to be hard melting it down later.”

“We don’t need to. We’re going to slam it into monsters later. We have to get revenge for what they did to Antarctica.”

“Mm... Is that possible?”

“It should be if Sharana and Ruyue both materialize and I use my skill.”

I made a V sign with my fingers, making Licorice laugh.

“That will definitely be impactful. It might not be as impactful as seeing a part of Antarctica torn off, but it should make up for it to a degree.”

“Right?”

“So you can do something like this with contracting three elementals... Should I help too, Dear Husband?”

“I was just about to ask.”

We exchanged mischievous smiles. One more person was now drinking mana potions every ten minutes.

As my inventory was full of highest grade mana potions that easily cost over 100 million won, all I needed was ten minutes to fill up my mana again.

Each potion gave 50,000 mana, about a fourth of my maximum. If I were in battle, with only a fourth of my mana able to be filled up every ten minutes, I wouldn't be able to freely use it as I am now. However, the current situation was entirely different from a battle. As it was the first time I was preparing for something by pouring out my mana, I became engrossed in it.

Now that I thought about it, since I could replenish my mana with Peruta Circuit whenever I wanted, was I wasting my time when I wasn't in battle by not doing anything with my full mana?

This was what I thought as I made this ‘strategic weapon.’ But when I thought more about it, the only time I wasn’t in battle was when I was eating or taking showers. My own lifestyle made me tear up a bit.

Regardless, when I met up with the others, I had become a captain of an icy land three kilometers in diameter.

“What is this!?”

Hwaya shouted the moment she saw what I made. Feeling the freezing energy oozing out, she shuddered with shock.

“Shin, did you cut off a part of Antarctica? Did you copy that demon?”

“Why would I cut a perfectly fine land when there’s water around? This is just ice.”

“You made this by freezing water? You... You’re going beyond my expectation by the day.”

Hwaya just laughed as if she just heard the most absurd thing. After that, she praised my construction skill.

The following comments were mostly positive. Father who liked things in big scale obviously liked what I had made, and Michel also smiled when he heard what I was planning on using it for. Ilayda clapped no matter what I did, and Ina enjoyed that

everything was ice. Of course, she was made to strengthen the land with Licorice and me immediately afterwards.

“Cold! Shin, is this to help us adjust to the cold?”

“Adjust?”

“Yeah. You know, Oceania’s countries are all frozen right now.”

“Oh, I forgot to mention that.”

When I turned around, Licorice made an ‘oops’ expression. I sighed and asked her.

“Is there anything else?”

“That’s it, Dear Husband. The satellite images only show the frozen white land, and Guardian and Freedom Wing can’t enter either. It’s too cold, and there are too many enemies in the landing zones.”

“I expected it when I heard that the land was frozen... Is it a demon that can control freezing energy?”

“Then won’t this land be counter-effective?”

“Not necessarily. I can make it into a different attribute with my

skill.”

“This 3 km land of ice?”

“That’s what the skill does.”

I didn’t make the land bigger after that. In fact, Ina, Licorice, and I slowly compressed it with our mana. Of course, it was still huge, and a satellite took a picture of us sailing through the ocean. It seemed the satellite really didn’t have better things to do.

While Guardian and Freedom Wing continued to sit around helplessly, we advanced towards New Zealand. More than a few had their hope in us. On one hand, people hailed Revival, while on the other hand, people complained that we were taking too long. Some even said we were dawdling during a time of humanity’s existential crisis.

“It’s great that so many people love and care about the future of humanity. Earth has a bright future.”

“Keyboard warriors never go away.”

“I thought people like them were only in Korea!”

“That’s misunderstanding, Ye-Eun. All humans are good at imposing their beliefs and a sense of duty on others.”

The reason we were heading to New Zealand was simply that it was the closest. We planned on going through all the islands starting from New Zealand, then entering Australia.

As we were getting close to New Zealand, Hwaya suddenly exclaimed in surprise.

“I can’t access the internet!”

“So we’re starting...”

I took out my crossbow and looked up towards the sky. When I put more strength into my eyes, I could see winged beings in the skies of New Zealand. As if to copy me, Ina also widened her eyes in the same pose. I pat her head and asked Ina.

“Ina, do you want to play a shooting game with Daddy?”

“Un!”

“What are you teaching to a kid... Let Mommy join in too!”

As Ina, Hwaya, and I stood side by side on the glacier and took out our weapons, Daisy also stepped up. She opened her inventory and spoke proudly.

“Today is, quality over quantity. Laki, time to shine.”

Right, the enemy demon was suspected of using ice. Laki, who wielded lava, would be their natural enemy. However, I asked Daisy with worry.

“His lava was strong when he was alive, but can he wield lava when he’s an undead?”

“Not like when, he was alive.”

Daisy acknowledged her undead’s flaw!? Of course, she wasn’t done.

“But attribute shifted. Became more toxic. His body became harder. Now, there’s nothing to fear.”

“It’s good that you’re confident, but I’m going to be worried sick for you.”

“I already said, it’s too early. Kang Shin’s love, I’ll have to refuse it.”

“Sometimes I really want to hit you.”

Along with me, all the other long ranged attackers began to attack. I shot out bolts of lightning, while Hwaya and Ina also fiercely shot out fire and ice. With Licorice and the several tens of succubi, countless attacks flew through the air.

“Usually, the ones in the air are the stronger ones.”

“I almost feel bad for them.”

I felt like I could hear the demons' screams. However, Daisy didn't seem to enjoy hearing them.

“Laki, go.”

[Grrrrrrraaaah!]

Laki made an unpleasant roar and shot out of Daisy's inventory. Its immense heat was trying to melt the land we spent so much time freezing.

“Hey, send him away quickly.”

“... Laki.”

Daisy puffed out her cheeks at my scolding. Laki flapped his wings a few times and soared into the sky in an instant. We then ignored the demons fighting Laki and continued to shoot out attacks.

[He's strong! He might equal Lespina-nim!]

[Nonsense! Just keep gathering power, he's just an undead!]

We continued to lower the number of demons in the air. Although their initial target must have been us, but Laki charged towards them with his huge body, whipped them with his tail, poured lava all over them, sent them flying with shockwaves, and displayed an overall overwhelming strength.

Laki was more than enough to deal with the demons' attacks. In fact, with him, things would be even quicker. If he continued as he was doing now, it would only be a matter of time before we landed.

“Hwaya, can you detect him?”

“I’m not sure, but I know their leader isn’t in New Zealand. I know for sure that he’s in the inner area of Australia. There are some strong ones here too, but... they’re manageable.”

“Good. When the land comes into view, everyone get off the ice and be on standby! The ones that can do long ranged attacks should split in half and fight the demons on land and air!”

It only took a moment for this time to come. A frozen land soon appeared in the distance along with smirking bluish black skinned demons that shot magical attacks at us.

It seemed the broken piece of Antarctica first collided here. Though it seemed to be in Australia now, a part of New Zealand’s coast was a mess.

“Huhu... I’ll make you regret it.”

“Mmm... Won’t this bother New Zealand’s citizens more?”

“But won’t it look good? I’m sure they’re more worried about monsters and demons than their land.”

“That’s true... Okay, you take care of the rest. Good luck!”

Hwaya clenched her fists and flew up without knowing exactly what I planned to do. As I saw her go, I grinned. The coast was now near!

“Is everyone ready to jump off?”

[Hero is the only one left!]

Lotte shouted with the ones unable to fly on her back. The longed ranged attackers were still shooting out attacks, blocking off the demons’ magic bullets and flames. Everything was perfect!

“Ruyue, Sharana!”

[I’m ready!]

[How exciting!]

The two elementals materialized, held each other's hands and stood in the center of the frozen land. I could feel their energy being focused on the frozen land entirely. The land was breathing!

“Launch!”

In that instant, the frozen land that had been compressed to 1.5 km in diameter suddenly accelerated. The humongous glacier was suddenly racing through the ocean at a speed of several hundred kilometers per hour. It was certainly a sight to behold!

“Wow, even Dear Husband's scale of water skiing is different!”

“That looks fun... I want to be on it too!”

“Whooooooooo!”

I howled above the frozen land jetting through the ocean. The demons watching us gasped in shock and shot magic bullets towards us, but not only did most of them miss, I could smack away the few that got close with my spear.

However, demons were indeed different from monsters. Once they realized their magic was ineffective, most of them scattered, while some remained in a safe area and gathered mana in mass. It seemed like the method humans employed when dealing with massive monsters.

Of course, they were all useless!

[Surf!]

The moment Ruyue and Sharana shouted together, the rolling waves got fiercer and more violent. Eventually, the wave became large enough to carry the frozen land. Ruyue and Sharana was taking a huge amount of mana from me to control this natural phenomenon, but I could withstand this much!

I wasn't done yet. I gulped down a mana potion I had prepared beforehand and shouted at the girls.

“Let's go! Jump!”

[Jump!]

The wave rose higher. The 1.5 km frozen land was perfectly balanced above the wave dozens of meters in height. Of course, it would have been impossible without Ruyue and Sharana's power. What happened next was even more shocking. As I said before, the wave became even more violent and eventually fiercely smacked the frozen land we were riding!

“Whoo! Let's fly straight to New Zealand!”

[Shin, if you were planning something so fun, you should have let me join in!]

“It’s too late!”

As the frozen land was already amply strengthened by my mana, it didn’t break in the slightest as it quickly soared to the sky. At the same time, a refreshing smile appeared on my face. The frozen land I made was already well beyond the coastline, above the eyes of countless demons staring at us gobsmacked.

There was only one thing left to do.

“Art is an explosion! Gaia Buster!”

Author’s note:

The final frozen land has a diameter of 1.5 kilometers and a thickness (height) of 4~5 meters! It shows how strong Sharana, Ruyue, and Shin have gotten!

Chapter 256. Above the Frozen Land (7)

The moment I struck down with my Chaotic Spear, black lightning shot out in a zigzag pattern from the center of the frozen land. It only took a moment before the pure white land turned black.

[Wooow!]

[What an amazing skill!]

“It’s going to crumble soon!”

I pushed Chaotic Spear deeper, and the blackened frozen land, with a crack running down the middle, began to crackle with fierce lightning. Although my original power might not have been enough to cause such a feat, with the Collapsing Ring I obtained recently, I could pull off such a miraculous feat! Even the demons who might have been doubtful were now beginning to understand what I was doing.

[Stop him! That’s a skill!]

[Such a powerful skill! If only Lespina-nim was here!]

But this Lespina-nim isn’t here, is she!?

I shouted and pushed my spear deeper. In that instant, my skill

activated completely. The huge sheet of ice separated into hundreds of thousands of giant pieces and rained down on the ground. The pieces were all strengthened to the limit with my mana and was imbued with the black lightning attribute through Gaia Buster's effect. It was a magnificent sight one would want to capture with his camera.

[Lightning filled with an evil curse! Dodge!]

[There's too many of them, damn it!]

Damn it? That's good to hear! I flew up using Talaria and looked at the magnificent scene I created. The icy boulders crackling with black lightning were all hurling towards the demons.

The demons resisted with their magic or weapons, but there were just too many to deal with. Furthermore, my mana, imbued in each piece of the icy boulder, prevented them from destroying them easily. Once a demon couldn't defend against one, that was it, as several tens then several hundreds of icy boulders soon collected his life. Of course, Gaia Buster didn't end just because its target died. The power of the black lightning lied in its final huge explosion!

[Kuaaaak!]

[It's a disaster!]

[To think there's a human with such a terrifying skill!]

[Im, Impossible... It's the Demon God-nim's fury, Demon God-nim's fury!]

“I’m not a [Demon God](#)! I’m Kang Shin! Uhahahaha!”

The black icy boulders raining down on the coastal area of New Zealand didn’t stop until the demons’ screams were no longer heard. Whenever demons appeared that seemed to want to say something, the remaining boulders exploded with fierce mana and silenced them.

With so much mana exploding at once, whirlpools of mana were created in several places. I quickly flew down and pulled them towards me with Peruta Circuit.

“Whew, I’m getting so much mana from these. Maybe it’s because they were made from my mana! Sharana, Ruyue! Let’s kill the survivors!”

[Leave it to me!]

[Me too, me too!]

The two materialized elementals received the mana recovered by Peruta Circuit and shot out in different directions. With Talaria, I quickly soared across the half-destroyed New Zealand and looked for surviving demons.

[You cruel bastard, do you know how many of our kin you just killed!?!]

One seemed to have a stealth type ability, as a blue-skinned demon suddenly shot up from the ground when I was flying close to the ground and tried to stab with a dagger. The demon moved quicker than I could detect him with my mana, but he had unfortunately underestimated my reaction speed!

“I might not know how many I killed, but...”

With a swift thrust of my spear, I pierced the demon’s neck. However, the speed of his dagger wasn’t affected in the slightest. Even as he coughed up a mouthful of blood, he forced his eyes open and shouted with a heinous laugh.

[His Majesty, the great Demon Lord, shall draw your blood as oblation!]

In the Luka continent, I had my fair share of experience with demons. One thing all demons had in common was their tenacious life force. Before his dagger could reach my neck, I ignited chaos flames and burnt up his entire body. Then, I finished my sentence.

“I know I can add another to the count.”

[Ku...]

As if to erase even his death throes, chaos flames surged violently

and burnt his body to a crisp. I murmured with a snort.

“You massacred millions of humans and what, you’re curious how many demons I killed? Are you trying to make me feel guilty?”

There was no such thing as justice. Everyone fought to survive. What was important was knowing the weight of one’s crimes and still taking steps forward. I long since had this resolve.

Frozen by the demons, carpet-bombed by black ice, and now burnt and crushed to the ground. The lands of New Zealand now really looked like a scene from a catastrophe. The corpses of the New Zealand’s people from when the demons invaded had been buried in ice. Now, they were revealed under the cracked ice... No, most were destroyed. Seeing them, I couldn’t help but think that my attack had damaged these corpses.

“This damned demons, they dare to guilt me with human corpses lying everywhere?”

No matter how dirty I felt, I couldn’t stop because of it. Even now, Guardian and Freedom Wing couldn’t even near the perimeter of Oceania. However, if we went crazy and forced the demons to come to us, Guardian and Freedom Wing would naturally gain a chance to enter. That would mean a quicker reclamation of land.

Though I was a bit ashamed of what I had done, I came here to protect Oceania. I came to prevent any more casualties from

occurring. Rather than corpses of already dead people, the living was more important to me.

“Huu... Okay, let’s go.”

I absorbed the mana released by the demon’s body and created a black whirlpool enveloping my spear. At the same time, I roused the power of this mana and shouted at the top of my lungs for all to hear.

“To all survivors, come! The Hero you want to kill so much is here!”

[You used Provoke! All being in this land attacks you with intense hatred!]

From what seemed like a desolate land, injured demons suddenly began to rise. I most likely worsened their injuries with my provocation. It must be painful and vexing. There might have been demons with the ability to resist my Provoke, but most of them probably didn’t resist on purpose.

[He’s the Hero.]

[If we kill him, the Demon Lord doesn’t need to come!]

[He’s the one who massacred our kin.]

[Glory to the Demon Lord, Blessing of the Demon God to Lespinaninim!]

The demons began to gather towards me. Ruyue and Sharana busily flew around, creating pillars of ice and scythes of wind to bully the demons. However, their gazes were fixed on me. Looking at their hate-filled eyes, I grinned. At the same time, I roused the power of my Evil Eyes to the limit.

[Kak!]

[M-My body...!]

[The Hero even has Evil Eyes!?]

It was surprising. I expected the demons remaining in New Zealand to be weaker than the ones in Australia, but only about 30% of them instantly turned to stone. Most of the others only had their movements affected. Although I could petrify more of them if I surged up my mana to the extreme, it was quicker for me to just kill them directly. After all, even if I didn't pour mana into my Evil Eyes, they were already restraining the demons' movements.

“Let's fight!”

[You cowaaaard!]

The strongest looking demon, a female demon seemingly about SSS rank in strength, charged towards me. In an instant, I roused

my charm and shot it towards her. She immediately stopped moving. Her face flushed, while she roused her magic power to desperately resist my charm. During this time, she was revealing too many openings that I didn't know where to begin.

[You...!]

There was no need to hesitate. A whirlwind of white flames, formed from chaos flames and Heroic Aura, sent her head flying. Although her headless body remained standing for a moment, it soon scattered into the air as particles of mana. Peruta Circuit's powerful rotation immediately pulled the mana towards my spear and strengthened the enveloping whirlpool.

Although the demons had bountiful strength, their defenses were even worse than ordinary monsters. A single hit from them could be fatal, but they were equally likely to die from a single hit. I just had to kill them before they could kill me. How simpler could things get?

[He's...]

[Strong...!]

For a moment, silence descended. It seemed this female demon was really the strongest of the bunch, as the demons looked incapable of accepting the fact that she died so easily. With a smirk, I provoked them.

“What? Aren’t you going to attack?”

[... Kill him!]

However, demons each had their special magic, and their black magic was especially annoying to deal with. If they attacked simultaneously, things became even more annoying.

[Burn!]

[This lightning even more powerful than your own will burn you to a crisp!]

The demons surrounding me all attacked me with malice. Without even a single delay, the wings of Talaria flapped. I instantly shot up into the sky, dodging their attacks. Then, I swung my spear once.

“O elementals, help me!”

Like stars lighting up the milky way, countless elementals followed the trace of my spear. An unimaginable number of elementals were sticking to my spear.

[Answer to the Prince’s fury!]

[Follow the will of this star, the will of the Prince!]

[Become a part of the light that keeps away evil!]

Eh? The elementals' comments were different from the usual. Did they study philosophy in the meanwhile? Although I was a bit curious, there were already several magic spells flying towards me. Since the start of this battle, I was never late to carry out my thoughts to action.

Ruyue and Sharana flew in and blocked the magic attacks one by one, but I made them fall back. Then, I released the power of mana and elementals enveloping my spear.

“Elemental Tempest!”

[Critical Hit!]

[Kuaaaak!]

[Demon Lord Your Highness!]

[Damn it!]

The fury of the elementals covered the land, and, at the same time, dozens of scythes appeared in the air and sliced the demons apart. The death throes of the demons rang out, and a cool breeze soon blew. It was as if the power of the death god was following me.

“Huuu...”

In the wake of Elemental Tempest was silence. I accelerated Peruta Circuit once more to refill my halved mana and retrieved my spear. At that moment, someone flew into my embrace.

“Daddy!”

“Oh, Ina. You’re here, now?”

“Un! I came back after cleaning up the blue flies in the sky!”

Sorry, Ina. Forgive your father who can only teach you these things...

“That’s great. Let’s work hard for a bit more. When we’re done, Daddy will play with Ina for a whole day.”

“Really!? Okay! I’ll try my best!”

Ina cheerfully clenched her fists. Following her, other members of Revival arrived. We entered New Zealand perfectly. The only thing left to do was to free this from the leaderless demons. I set my resolve and shouted.

“Let’s go, everyone! We’re going to finish New Zealand by the end of the day!”

[Ueeeeek... I can't spin spin anymore...!]

Good. Thankfully, there was one that failed his philosophy class...

Demon God = Ma Shin (마신), which clearly is similar to the MC's name.

Chapter 257. Above the Frozen Land (8)

New Zealand was a nation 2.5 times bigger than Korea, but Australia was easily over 25 times bigger than New Zealand. Although I didn't think this huge country would be filled with demons in every corner, I still expected it to have more demons than New Zealand. When I thought about facing them, I couldn't help but hasten myself.

After leaving Daisy's Laki to all aerial battles, we quickly began to recover regions of New Zealand. Unlike monsters that moved with their instincts, demons moved with a purpose and goal. It was to destroy human civilization and annihilate humans. There were practically no surviving humans in New Zealand with not a single building standing unfazed.

"Cruel... It's only been two days too...!"

"Maybe I should have come even if I was alone."

I began to feel rushed. I wondered if I made the wrong choice. If I knew New Zealand was wiped out, I should have gone to Australia immediately. At least, New Zealand and Australia's population wasn't too big... No, I shouldn't be thinking this way.

I put away my useless thoughts. The only thing I should focus on right now was getting to Australia as quickly as possible.

"Australia might be in a better situation. Most of the population live in coastal areas. We won't need to go deep into the continent."

“I cleared Event Dungeons there, so I know that. But having the population close together means they’re easier targets. Damn it. I hope Guardian and Freedom Wing are doing well.”

Thinking about how unreliable those two groups were for things like this, I sighed. There were definitely troops deployed to New Zealand, but we couldn’t even catch a glimpse of them yet and we were almost finished. I didn’t want to believe they were wiped out, but... perhaps the damages they received this time were too severe.

As I boldly claimed, clearing New Zealand only took us a day. With most of the demons’ army stationed in Australia, we mercilessly bombarded the demons, only mindful of any potential survivors. We tried to melt the frozen land with Laki’s and Hwaya’s power, but there seemed to be no end to it. In the end, we decided to look for another way after eliminating the cause of this situation.

[You will all bow before Lespina-nim’s power!]

“And you bowed before mine.”

[The difference between me and Lespina-nim is like that of heaven and earth! Don’t think you can reach her level by easily subjugating us!]

“Yeah, yeah, goodbye.”

I severed the demon's head and sighed. With this, we were done in New Zealand. However...

No matter how hard we looked, we couldn't discover any specific details on this demon named Lespina. All we knew was that Lespina was female. When Hwaya found out, she wore a worried expression and looked at me.

“Shin, she's a demon! Someone who executed a massacre of this level! If anyone finds out, Revival's public image will plummet. Got it?”

“Hwaya, do you think I can seduce any and all women?”

“Eh...?”

Hwaya's conscious-stricken face made me feel strange. I, who was once called an orc, was being treated this way by Hwaya Eleni Mastiford. Though, this was most certainly because of my charm stat.

“Don't worry. I won't let a demon live no matter what.”

“Y-Yeah. Good.”

“Huu...”

I swung my spear and dusted off the demon's blood before

looking up at the sky. The aerial battle was also coming to a close with Laki's lava swallowing the demons. Every last demon in New Zealand was killed. It was the result of a tough day of work.

But what did it matter? There were too many irreversible damages. The land was still frozen, the buildings were crumbled, and the people were dead. No matter where I looked, ruin was the only word that popped up in my head. I asked in a murmuring voice.

“How many survivors are there?”

“There are still about 500,000 alive. New Zealand wasn't their main goal.”

“... Let's hurry to Australia.”

Thanks to us drawing attention here, by the time we cleaned up the last remaining demon, Guardian and Freedom Wing could enter New Zealand. We made contact with them and left them to take care of the aftermath before immediately heading to Australia.

Although there were many small islands, Oceania was mainly comprised of the Australia continent. This Lespina should also be there. The plan was to kill her and prevent future harm. If the demons pointed their sword elsewhere, there wouldn't be disaster quite like it.

[Guaaaaaaaaa!]

Laki's roar rumbled far and wide. It was because of the countless number of demons waiting for us above the coastal seas of Australia.

[He is this world's Hero.]

[One who killed our kin.]

[Make it so that Lespina-nim doesn't have to come herself!]

“Laki, clean.”

[Guoooooooooooo!]

Daisy calmly commanded as she swung her whip. Immediately after Laki's roar rang out, a large number of flames shot out from Laki's mouth and attacked the demons. We also sniped down the demons dodging Laki's flames and dwindled their number. Even so, more and more demons were popping up.

[Finish it here!]

[Let us decide the fate of Earth, Hero!]

Although Laki's flames were endlessly scorching the demons,

with their sheer number, we couldn't stop them from casting their magic. Among them were special demons who gathered to create a giant magic capable of threatening us. In the end, I jumped down from Laki's back and got on Lotte's.

“You guys charge forward!”

“We'll take half too, Shin. You take care of the left side!”

Hwaya and Ina seemed to be thinking the same thing, as they both shot up into the air. I trusted the two of them. I nodded and began to charge forward.

“Uoooooooo! Try killing me!”

[The Hero has come forth!]

[Focus your magic on him!]

I roused Absolute Soul's power to the extreme. Peruta Circuit's spin created a whirlpool of aura enveloping my body, weapon, and even Lotte. A countless number of elementals and a boundless amount of mana layered the whirlpool as if to protect it.

“Wind King's Rage!”

I added wind and lightning on top of it. The demons sent innumerable magic flying towards me. Some of them looked

powerful enough to make me depart this world, but I simply grinned and charged into the storm of magic.

“Haaaaaap!”

I clashed with them. When these destructive masses of mana detonated, the mana I absorbed with Absolute Soul overwhelmed the life force I lost.

“Lotte, you can withstand it, right?”

[I’m fine! Let’s kill them, Hero!]

When the demons saw me charging continuously without a pause, they became flustered and lost their formation. Although there were demons that continued to shoot magic towards me, unless they used a mass chant magic, none could pierce through my fierce whirlpool of aura. In fact, the moment they touched it, the mana composing them were absorbed by the whirlpool, only strengthening it.

[He’s absorbing our magic!?!]

[Could he be our kin?]

[He’s too quick... Kuhuk!]

“I’ll pierce right through you all!”

I shouted vehemently, coursing through the air with Lotte. We were like a giant spear. Looking from the outside at the whirlpool of aura centered around us, we would probably look just like it.

On the other hand, Hwaya and Ina's magic power raged and disrupted the demons' magic. This was also a good method, and a much better method if one didn't plan on directly fighting with his body like me. However, for someone like me who was born stupid...!

“Come, you blue monkeys! Where did your spirit from earlier go!?”

[That guy is crazy!]

[The magic of the demon race isn't working!]

It worked. It was just that I was using their magic power to regenerate myself! Peruta Circuit restored the parts of body destroyed from resisting their magic and energized all bodily functions. Just this wasn't enough to fill up my lost life force. Although I never learned it from anybody, I came to understand my body's state, and when I became more skilled in Peruta Circuit, I could do this as easily as breathing!

“Uoooooooo!”

My charge became more and more intense. The whirlpool of aura

whirling around me became so big that it was getting harder to manage it. The wind and lightning created from Wind King's Rage also empowered the whirlpool. Now, average magic was ripped apart the moment they touched this whirlpool. The demons were no exception.

[Stop his charge.]

[He's truly the Hero! Contact Lespina-nim!]

"You'll all die before that!"

The amplification of Wind King's Rage already reached its peak, but I had no intention of stopping it. I tightly grasped onto the spear enveloped by the extreme energy that I might miss in a moment of carelessness. I fluidly changed my direction in the air and charged towards another group of demons with Lotte. It was at this moment.

[Stop!]

My body halted. At the same time, it felt like the energy pivoting around me was shaking. Why? I knew the exact reason. Was it because I became so used to feeling and wielding mana?

The corner of my mouth curled up into a smile. I urgently gathered the dissipating energy and scattered it in all directions. A thunderous sound rang out.

[Kuaaaaaak!]

[Lespina-nim!]

[Damn... Kuaaaa!]

It was only then that I realized how immense the energy I was wielding was. It felt like a piece of the sky was being ripped apart.

The seemingly infinite number of demons filling up the sky disintegrated without leaving a trace, and my companions also fell back in shock.

It didn't take long until the great explosion of mana subsided. It was because Peruta Circuit's intense rotation didn't leave the scattering mana alone and pulled it back in.

The energy created from the explosion was also sucked in, gathering in a single point, the tip of the spear I held out. With that, I regained a clear vision of the surrounding.

I was facing a demon. She was beautiful just like the power she held in her body.

"I didn't think I'd meet you so soon. I thought you would be waiting for me deep inside Australia."

[I can't let you freely decimate His Highness Demon Lord's army

any further. I planned on taking care of you lot when you were still in that tiny island country, but...]

“They were all too weak. I’m not done yet though.”

I grinned. I compressed the mana gathered at my spear tip even smaller. The long-haired female demon gritted her teeth. She was also capable of wielding massive energy equaling me. I could tell just by looking at the longsword in her hand.

Furthermore, I could tell from the ability she used before that it was fatal to me, who had gotten my power from the dungeon. Since I was hit with it once, I could tell what kind of an effect it had, but I couldn’t quite understand the mechanism behind it. Could she use her ability without knowing the principles behind it just like how I used the skills I had?

[Arrogant human... Someone who only relies on power that does not belong to you!]

“Come, Lespina. I’ll let you know whether this power belongs to me or not.”

It was the start of a boss fight.

Chapter 258. Above the Frozen Land (9)

Lespina had violet hair, light-blue skin, and frightening white irises. Setting these aside, she could be called a beauty by human standard. However, her racial characteristics stood out too much and made her look like a monster than a woman.

When I pointed my spear towards her, she suddenly started a conversation.

[Hero, answer me. You've been to the Luka continent, haven't you?]

“Haaaap!”

I ignored her and charged forward. After quickly shooting the aura remaining at my spear tip, I gathered nearby elementals and lengthened my spear blade.

“Elemental Blade!”

[Hic, I hate myself for riding this again.]

[Why are you crying? It's a fun joy ride!]

[Roller coaster!]

[I told you, your skills won't work against me!]

It seemed she wasn't limited to using her power as she held up her sword against me. Although the blade made from Elemental Blade got shorter, I continued to charge towards her. When I used it, I had already assumed she would cancel it. Finding out that her power couldn't completely cancel my skills was an unexpected benefit.

Lespina seemed to know that too, as she bit her lips and pointed her sword towards me. If this was all there was to her power, she wouldn't have been able to use a piece of Antarctica as a vehicle.

[You won't even have time to feel pain!]

A white aura erupted from her body. In an instant, I was surrounded by an incredible freezing energy. It was hard to resist it even with Ruyue's power.

“Ruyue.”

[I've been waiting.]

Ruyue seemed to be feeling our opponent's power as she immediately infused herself into my armor at my call. I then infused Sharana into my spear.

[What about me, Master?]

“You come inside my body, Peika.”

[Got it!]

When I used the three elemental simultaneously as Spirit Auras, a huge amount of mana was consumed. With the mana I poured into Wind King's Rage earlier, I had to draw Peruta Circuit to its limit to keep up with the amount I spent.

Of course, with my boundless mana numbering 200,000 MP, I didn't really worry no matter how much mana I used. As long as I had my mana potions, that is! While she looked at me with a shocked face, I took out about ten of the highest grade mana potions, putting one in my mouth and putting the rest between my belt. It was preparation in case she could seal my inventory like worlds' enemies.

Well, I suspected she couldn't. To confirm my suspicion, I held up my spear again.

[Elementals... As I thought, you are...]

“Huaaaap! Whirlpool of chaos!”

I didn't use Peika's energy, but rather ignited chaos flames and strengthened it with Mad Typhoon. When Sharana's power was added and a whirlpool of white flames surged, she shouted once again. This time, with a hand gesture.

[I already said it's useless!]

Feeling the energy sweeping over me, I nodded. I could somewhat feel the extent of its power. Although it couldn't harm me directly, this power had the ability to drive away the power that wasn't mine.

Rather than a curse, this power was more similar to a blessing. I deduced that it was the ability to turn all things into its pure state. In that case, I could see how she destroyed the Event Dungeons, as Event Dungeons were artificial prisons created by the Dungeon Lord, Sherafina, over the pathways broken through by demons.

Likewise, the power possessed by explorers didn't belong to them. It was a power refined by the dungeon so that explorers could more easily wield it. Through the dungeon's power, it was forcefully made to fit explorers' bodies. It was still a genuine power, but it was still not a power purely honed by its user. I recently began to break out of this fence, so I realized what her power was doing.

However, this flame, the chaos flame...!

“Even a fistful of this flame will hurt a lot!”

[If you can burn me with that puny flame, try it!]

The whirlpool of flames surrounding my spear was far smaller than it was initially. Lotte and I charged towards Lespina with no

hesitation, and Lespina swung her sword filled with freezing energy.

[Freeze!]

“Ha!”

I snorted and received her sword with my spear. In an instant, a terrifying amount of steam rose up.

[I can see why you're arrogant! But your flame still won't work against me!]

“Let's see if you can!”

When her sword blocked my spear, I pulled back immediately and attacked her shoulders. Retrieving my spear and quickly attacking again was something I've been doing before I ever entered the dungeon. At my current level, my quick stab didn't allow her to defend.

[As if that'll work!]

However, just before my spear pierced her shoulder, ice shot up from her shoulder and blocked it. Wrapped in chaos flames, my spear clashed with her ice, with only foggy steam being the result.

[This is all you can do as a Hero!? That's why you ran when you

faced His Highness Demon Lord! I'll freeze you and offer you to His Highness!]

“Frozen meat doesn't taste good!”

Although I rebutted nonchalantly, her freezing energy was truly terrifying! Its power was easy to see. After all, it was what froze an entire continent! The moment Ruyue left my armor, it might be able to freeze me in an instant.

I vehemently thrust my spear and stopped her sword in its tracks. Steam continually rose and surrounded us, but neither Lespina nor I were rookies who would have our visions hindered by mere steam. At some point, Lespina seemed to have noticed that she wasn't in her usual condition.

[You, you have Evil Eyes!]

“Were you so slow that you just noticed?”

[You think Evil Eyes of that caliber can slow me? Looks like you got your position as a Hero through a talking contest!]

Lespina's movements suddenly became stronger. She injected a large amount of freezing energy into her sword and smacked away my spear. Then, she leaped up by kicking off the air. I encouraged Lotte to not give her any time to prepare her skill.

“Lotte, charge as quickly as you can!”

[Understood, Hero!]

I immediately activated Divine Speed and lowered my upper body. Lotte immediately radiated a dazzling golden light and accelerated towards Lespina!

As a Blaze Queen, Lotte had a close affinity to light and flame. It wouldn't be an overstatement to say that she was the mixture of light and flame given form. If flame was the symbol of destruction, then the light was the symbol of incredible speed! Her instant acceleration was just as quick as my Divine Speed skill. The day the Lava King became Laki, her technique that pierced through the Lava King was also the result of this aspect of hers. As such, the moment Lespina shot up, we were soon catching up with her.

[Kuk!]

“Die!”

With chaos flames and the mass acceleration from Lotte's charge, the Chaotic Spear carried a terrifying power as it shot towards Lespina. It seemed she didn't expect that I'd chase after her so quickly. Unfortunately, her magic didn't seem to require a long cast time.

[Shin!]

“Kuk!”

My spear stopped in its path. It was only a span of a hand away from Lespina. Could she have been quicker than me? No, that's impossible. It was just that Lotte and I had been frozen.

I realized now that the crystals of ice left in Lespina's path had swarmed towards us and restrained us. Although they were carrying a terrifying energy, they had hidden it while I was charging forward and had suddenly released it when enough crystals gathered.

[Huhu, that's right!]

“Ku...”

[The air is strange! The air in this area must freeze whatever is in it!]

Ruyue screamed and radiated a large amount of light. Lotte also released terrifying flames she normally kept stored in her body and melted the ice covering us. Although we succeeded in defrosting ourselves before we were attacked... We had to accept that she pulled one over us. To think she'd leave a hidden magic in the air knowing that we'd chase after her!

[You can die now!]

“As if I'll get hit by that a second time!”

A white light shot out from her body. I immediately used Ruyue's power and created a large ice barrier around us.

[Lotte, push through! The ice barrier will block her ice!]

[Kuaaaaang!]

Lotte seemed unhappy that she, a Blaze Queen, had been frozen even for a moment, as she let out a long howl and rushed forward. Before I noticed it, the ice barrier created by Ruyue's power was cut in half by Lespina's sword, and my spear barely stopped her sword in time.

[Kuk, all you have is brute force!]

“Huaaaaap!”

I couldn't let her fall back. I frantically pushed closer towards her. By continuously using Divine Speed, I attacked with my spear at a speed she couldn't keep up. However, just like before, ice armor appeared just when my spear was about to reach her, protecting her.

To prevent my spear from losing speed due to ice, I endlessly poured mana into Chaotic Spear. However, none of my attacks had a great effect. Even though I had far surpassed her reaction speed, she just had too much mana in her body!

“How old are you? When were you born?”

[I was strong from the moment I was born! I could be born because of His Highness' overwhelming power! My birth became the starting signal for His Highness Demon Lord's plan to conquer all worlds, and his plan will succeed! Hero, killing you and taking your world's power will be the first step to that goal!]

She didn't just stand around and get hit by my spear. Though slower, she also attacked with her sword. I blocked her attack with Ruyue's power covering my armor, but I couldn't stop damage from building up. Although I fiercely thrust my spear towards her chest and used Lightning Spear Storm, the skill wasn't activated properly, as expected. This ability of hers was truly irritating.

She endlessly poured her unique energy towards me and spoke.

[Huhu, it's getting harder and harder to use the dungeon's power, right? This power was given to me to destroy you, Hero, and all those related to the dungeon!]

“You're going to die here, so dream on!”

[I'm going to die here? ... You'll be the one who will die, Hero!]

At the same time that she shouted and slashed down with her sword, the mana inside her exploded fiercely. A truly absolute freezing energy!

“Ruyue, Sharana!”

[I'm already ready!]

[I'll empower Ruyue!]

In an instant, a barrier was created around Lotte and me. However, it wasn't enough to block her attack. The barrier was slowly broken, and Lotte spoke out in anger.

[A mere demon dares to attack Hero and me! Kuaaaaak!]

Lotte breathed out flames that looked like light! Lespina's freezing energy, which had penetrated Ruyue and Sharana's barrier, clashed with Lotte's dazzling breath. At that moment, someone approached me from behind.

"I'll help Daddy!"

"Ina!"

In this potentially dire situation, where extreme freezing energy was clashing with extreme heat, I smiled at Ina. I sounded calm, even in this situation.

[Your daughter is also that strong? Earth's power is strangely high...! Still, it's useless in front of my power!]

"You should only be able to nullify the dungeon's power!"

I rebutted and ignited aura around my spear. At the same time, I spoke to Ina.

“Ina, Daddy will take care of that woman. Ina should go help other members of Revival.”

“Daddy will fight alone?”

“Of course, she’s nothing. Plus... it might get a bit dangerous. Leave the aerial battle to Laki and go fight the demons on land with Mommy. Got it?”

“Un! I’ll tell Mommy!”

Ina was too innocent and kind. She nodded without a shred of doubt and turned around. At that moment, a spear of ice shot next to me. Its speed was so terrifying that I almost missed it.

[I’ll kill your daughter first!]

“Good joke.”

However, I wasn’t worried. If I thought Ina’s life was in danger, I would have made her fall back the moment she arrived. Though I told her to go back, it was only because she couldn’t win against Lespina. Even so, Ina would never die to Lespina. Rather than believing that she could, it was more believable hearing that

Walker died in a goblin's ambush.

“Dangerous. Mean. That was really mean.”

Ina touched the ice spear with her finger and easily lifted it up. Even though it was under Lespina's command, the ice spear followed Ina's commands like a docile sheep.

[What...!?!]

That was a realm of dominance that couldn't be explained with mana. I didn't know how it was possible, but in the past, even without the dungeon's help, Ina was able to match evenly with Hwaya and me. Now that she'd become a Gold ranked explorer, her control over ice was unmatched by anyone else.

“Actually, I want to be with Daddy. I'll punish evil people.”

“But, Ina, with your power...”

“Skadi.”

In an instant, an immense freezing energy swirled around Ina. Though somewhat similar to Lespina's, the energy that swirled around Ina was holier. Ina looked up with her eyes dyed blue. The ice spear in her hand instantly split into thousands and hovered in air. The sky, which had been Lespina's territory, had now become Ina's.

All freezing energy belonged to Ina, and her breath became freezing energy and gathered in midair.

The air transformed. Until now, it felt like the world was hostile, but now, it felt like the world had become my ally.

Ina raised her finger and pointed to Lespina. With just that, the freezing energy in her body scattered. It was so incredulous that I burst into laughter.

“If you bully Daddy, you’re a meanie! If you bully me, you’re a meanie! If you bully Daddy and me, you’re an even bigger meanie! I’ll punish you!”

[Impossible... A little brat!?!]

She was a child given an even greater blessing and curse of ice than the ice elemental Ruyue.

... And the fifth member of Revival to have obtained a god’s true name.

Tell me about these things sooner, Ina!

Chapter 259. Above the Frozen Land (10)

The spears created by Ina all had their tips pointed towards Lespina. Although she looked slightly worried, she soon smiled with a calm look.

[Not a God's descendant, but a mere human wielding a god's power! You want to punish me? Try it!]

“Eit.”

Ina waved her hand with a spirited shout. With that simple movement, the thousands of ice spears in the air all hurled towards Lespina.

[A simple attack like this...!]

Not wanting to lose to Ina, Lespina roused her freezing energy. Centered around Lespina, her raging freezing energy fought off the incoming spears. Ina frowned and reached out with her hands, but this time, it wasn't so easy to steal Lespina's freezing energy. When Lespina's attack and Ina's attack collided, a huge explosion erupted.

[You can't kill me with ice!]

Lespina's roar rang out in the midst of the explosion. Immediately afterward, a countless number of ice needles shot towards us from the foggy mist. Ina snorted and reached out with

her hands. The ice needles all halted and began to grow in size. Ina performed this feat with ease and spoke to me softly.

“I can’t use this power for long. Daddy has to finish it.”

“Got it. Focus on defense, Ina. Got it?”

“Un.”

If Lespina’s freezing energy could be completely erased, I would have a great advantage in this fight. Because Ina used the power of the god’s true name, the pace of the fight went up. I also couldn’t wait any longer...!

“Trishula.”

At my small whisper, a red aura descended into my Chaotic Spear. Immediately afterward, I charged towards Lespina. The sword in her hand no longer carried freezing energy, but black demonic energy.

[The power of ice is only part of my power. If you thought you could beat me now, you’ll be disappointed!]

“Lotte!”

[Now!]

I borrowed Lotte's power and charged towards her. I didn't need to say anything. Now that Ina had joined the fight, I just wanted to end this fight as quickly as possible.

[Uk!?]

“Looks like you have to train your martial arts more.”

I swung my spear and smacked away her sword filled with demonic energy. In the air, divine power clashed with demonic energy and created an ear-splitting sound. Lespina's eyes widened.

[Hero, you also have divine power... So you really were the kid that came to the Luka continent!]

“So annoying.”

I didn't know why she wanted to confirm this, but it seemed it was true that me going to the Luka continent wasn't the reason the Demon Lord came to Earth.

Without giving her an answer, I increased the speed of my attacks. Trishula had a 10% chance to deal triple damage to the enemy. The more I attacked, the more chance there was that Trishula's effect would activate. Rather than a single powerful blow, it was more efficient to deal several smaller attacks.

[Kuk!]

I finally dealt an effective blow. Just like before, my spear had squeezed through a gap in her defense, and the freezing energy that appeared to automatically defend against it had been stolen away by Ina. As a result, my spear penetrated her armor and pierced through her shoulder. Her black blood scattered into the air.

[KUAAAAAAA!]

Lespina's pained scream rang out. It was so loud that the Revival members and the demons they were fighting against stopped and turned their heads towards us. Most of the demons then began to fly towards us but were shot down by Ina's ice magic.

[Y-You... You dare to injure my noble body!]

“Noble my ass!”

After succeeding in injuring her once, I excitedly pushed her to a corner. Using Divine Speed once again, I poured a terrifying amount of attacks in three seconds. Trishula's power activated, and a huge hole appeared on her armor. As her blood rained down from the sky, her scream became louder.

[HUAAAAAAK! YOU, YOU DARE!]

A martial artist was naturally used to pain, but it seemed Lespina had no depth to our martial arts. She simply used her innate power

like a brute. Just like now!

[KUAAAAAA!]

An enormous amount of demonic energy emanated from her body and enveloped her. She had given up on controlling freezing energy and had chosen to convert all her power to pure demonic energy. The amount of demonic energy was similar to the Demon Army Commander Peruta had once fought in my body.

[In the end, you are only using power gained in the dungeon... I won't lose! I will deliver victory to His Highness!]

Lespina absorbed the surging demonic energy. She had ruined the balance of power in herself and had changed herself into pure demonic energy. Her transformation could be easily seen through her outer appearance.

Her violet hair became darker, her white irises also became black, and her blue skin became brown. However, she looked much better than before. Though, her appearance didn't really matter.

[I, Demon Army Commander Lespina El Tabac, can't tolerate your condescending look anymore!]

“Oh, is that so?”

I retorted playfully and held the spear in my hand to the front.

The chaos flames weakly blazing on my spear disappeared naturally like a candle blown out by the blowing wind.

Her overwhelming demonic energy swept over me, taking away the power given to me by the dungeon. Right, it was taking away my skills, but also my stats and levels. Plus, the power weakening my skills became stronger. I tried to use Divine Speed, but it didn't activate. I couldn't use my skills at all.

Then what about the skills in my pocket watch? What about items or skills contained in tattoos? I needed to test them.

“Huaaaaaap!”

[You used Frozen Roar! All enemies on the battlefield freeze in place. All allies temporarily become super-armored, recovers from all injuries, and has all abilities increased by 50%. Your chance of landing critical hits double when fighting enemies affected by Frozen Roar.]

It worked. For a moment, Lespina froze and my ability increased by 50%, no even more. That meant my Echo Ring was working. In that case, her ability... Good, I could win. Thanks to the roar, my power had somewhat returned to its normal state. Ina was also widening her eyes.

“Meanie! If you steal what's mine, you're a meanie!”

[Are petty tricks all you can do!?!]

By giving up freezing energy, she could obtain a huge amount of demonic energy. However, that also meant that she had given her up resistance to freezing energy. Now, Ina's attacks worked against her! Ina seemed to have felt this too, as she reached out with her hands and shot spheres of mana towards her. At the same time, I shouted Peika's name.

“Peika!”

[I've been waiting a long time!]

Like the name, Chaotic Spear suggested Chaotic Spear all sorts of energies inside, with the power of lightning now being one of them. I drew Peika's power to the limit with the Lightning God's power, and the materialized lightning absorbed the divine power from Trishula and radiated a dazzling light.

It would have been stronger if my stats hadn't been suppressed, but there was nothing I could do about it. I grit my teeth and urged Lotte on. With a single powerful flap, Lotte and I were in front of Lespina.

[Kuaaaaaaaa!]

“Huaaaaap!”

[You won't win against me!]

An enormous demonic energy shot up from the sword she held out. After easily fending off Ina's attack, her energy reached me... Then, everything froze.

[Kuk!?]

“Dieeeee!”

In front of Ina, who wielded the power of the Goddess Skaði, giving up freezing energy was a foolish move! I sneered without saying a word as I shot my spear forward. Looking like a bolt of lightning, Chaotic Spear pierced through Lespina.

[Critical Hit!]

In that instant, a scythe appeared and sliced her neck. With this, I was certain that all items were working properly.

A long and deep wound appeared on Lespina's neck, and she desperately drew more demonic energy. The seemingly endless amount of demonic energy was enough to make me fear it.

[Kuooooo!]

[Kuaaaaa!]

Lotte breathed out once again, but the demonic energy covering Lespina blocked Lotte's attack and detonated. I hurriedly used

Ruyue's power to create a barrier around us, but it was instantly broken, and the demonic energy swept over us.

[Critical Hit!]

“Kuk!”

[Kak!]

That hurt! Each particle of demonic energy contained sharp killing intent. Plus, it seemed the increased chance of receiving a critical hit effect activated, as over a 30% of my health disappeared in an instant.

At the same time, Lespina's scream rang out. It was the reaper's scythe that activated when I received a critical hit. I could charge forward like nothing happened thanks to being in a super-armored state, but even if I wasn't, the scythe attack would give me a chance to reposition myself.

While she writhed in pain from the second scythe attack, I quickly took out a potion and gulped it down. Then, I checked for Lotte's safety.

“Lotte, are you okay!?”

[Hero blocked most of it!]

Contrary to her words, she had discernible wounds in several places. With her recovery speed being one of the best among living creatures, her wounds were healing even at this moment, but she would still be in immense pain.

Seeing her act like she was unhurt, I grinned and tightened my grip on my spear. In the next moment, I widened my eyes and shouted.

“Shadow Blink!”

[Kugak!]

Get your hands off my daughter! Lespina overcame reaper’s scythe’s shock and was reaching her arm out to Ina. Just with this movement, a giant black hand appeared in the air and swooped down on Ina.

Before even a scratch appeared on Ina, I blinked behind Lespina and swung my spear. Demonic energy automatically shot up and clashed with my spear. Meanwhile, the black hand lost its power. Ina shot a giant ice spear and completely erased the giant clump of demonic energy in the air. However, I had to hurry. I could tell that Ina didn’t have much time left.

“You won’t be able to touch even a single hair on Ina unless I’m dead!”

[Then I’ll kill you first! You must have been in a hurry if you left

behind your little birdy!]

“...”

I endured pain as I fought against her sword. Even though she was powerful enough to push me away, because I was withstanding it with super-armor, it felt like I was taking more damage than necessary. I could tell that I had gotten much weaker than before. It wasn't just because I wasn't riding Lotte. It was because I was losing more and more of my stats as time went by. I couldn't delay things any longer.

“Overlord! Sky God's Rage!”

I shouted fearlessly, taking out my remaining trump cards.

[You used Overlord! While the skill is active, your HP and MP triples and all stats double! When attacking the enemy, you have 10% chance to afflict a random highest rank status effect. When attacked by an enemy, you have 20% chance to afflict a random highest rank status effect.]

[YOU...!?!]

I could feel my entire body erupting with strength. My health and mana shot up, and my embarrassingly weakened stats empowered my body once again. Peruta Circuit's spin absorbed Enigma, creating a black whirlpool that enveloped my armor.

There was more. My spear, which I didn't think could be strengthened any more, was imbued with Zeus' power and became longer. A dazzling golden energy combined with Overlord's energy, an indescribable black radiance spread out. It seemed the unique characteristic of Zeus' power couldn't be hidden even by Overlord, as Lespina noticed it and shouted.

[So you really did come to the Luka continent!]

“Yeah, I'm that Hero! So what? Stop pestering me about it!”

Eat this and die!

I hurled my spear towards her. At the same time, Ina also released a terrifying freezing energy. Demonic energy endlessly poured out of Lespina's body and fought against our attacks.

[With just this... WITH JUST THIS!]

Along with her howl, the demonic energy exploded. Her power, which only nullified the dungeon's power, was attempting to affect our attacks! Without hesitation, I charged into the explosion. The only thing in my mind was ending this as quickly as possible.

[I'll kill you!]

Amidst the cloud of heavy demonic energy, a sword popped out. I reached out with my gauntlet and grabbed it, but even with Overlord's protection, my power was slowly leaving me. Being able

to resist this power, which didn't lose to worlds' enemies... Lespina's ability truly made one tremble in fear.

[In the end... You are but a dog of the dungeon! There is no way that I, WE, will die to you!]

Lespina's appearance was quite a spectacle. Even with half of her body frozen and a spear of lightning piercing through her stomach, her eyes burning with black demonic energy showed that she still had life in her. My instincts told me that she managed to nullify the effects of stats and skills from our attacks!

Feeling her sword slicing through my gauntlet and trying to reach my hand, I grit my teeth and shouted into the communication channel.

[Everyone, no questions! Get back on the ground!]

Perhaps because of my urgent tone, everyone immediately took action. In just a few seconds, Hwaya reported back.

[Done!]

[Ina too!]

[I'm done!]

“KUAAAAAA!”

As soon as I heard their reports, I activated Crimson Roar. Lespina's eyes widened, as everything in the world became covered in black flames.

[Kuak, Kuaaaaak!]

“Huu...!”

The current Crimson Roar had been transformed by Enigma. As I got stronger, Crimson Roar became weaker in comparison to my other skills, but now transformed by Enigma into black flames, Crimson Roar had a shocking effect. It felt like night had descended in an instant. However, flames were still flames, the kind that scorched everything.

By the time these flames subsided, there wasn't anything left in the sky except Lotte, who wasn't affected by flames, and Lespina, who was in the middle of a flickering cloud of demonic energy.

Feeling the suppression of my stats being lightened, I looked around. Lespina was in a sorry state.

[Kuhak... You were hiding such a power...!]

“This is also the dungeon's power.”

[The dungeon's power...!]

The moment I said these words, parts of her burning body shockingly healed itself. Strength was returning to her voice. The suppression of my stats became stronger once again. It was a terrifying change. It was like winding back a videotape.

[Ku, kukuk! You shouldn't have said that! Do you regret it!? As long as it's the dungeon's power, as long as it isn't purely your power, you won't be able to harm me!]

With this, I understood. The skills in my pocket watch were different from normal skills and couldn't be detected by her. However, I was still affected by Frozen Roar. She had only detected Crimson Roar. Her ability was limited to her understanding, her detection. She could only suppress what she knew.

If that was it, then this fight was over.

[Ku... Kuaaaaaak!?]

Lespina's voice shot up. It was understandable. She must be confused as to why flames she suppressed were burning again.

[H-How!? Your flames should be...!]

“Sorry, but those flames are my power.”

I smiled. The flames burning her weren't from Crimson Roar.

They were ignited from the spear penetrating her stomach. Chaos flames.

[T-These flames...!? How? Before, I...!]

“Sorry.”

I smiled mischievously.

“That was a lie.”

[Kuaaaaak!]

Chaos flames flared up fiercely. Once ignited, nothing could extinguish them. Under the chaos flames, her power she squeezed out slowly subsided.

It was my victory.

Chapter 260. Above the Frozen Land (11)

In the first place, I had many doubts about her ability. If she could erase the dungeon's power completely, my qualification as an explorer might have disappeared in the worst case. The fact that this didn't happen meant that there was a limit to her ability. Knowing the extent of this ability was the key to victory.

Since she would never explain her ability to me, instead of using Overlord and driving her to a corner from the very beginning, I faced her directly with my body and tested her limits myself.

The first thing I found out was that she could suppress an explorer's stats and the skills he gained from the dungeon. The Spear Technique skill and the Elementalist skills were also included, but when the dungeon created a skill out of a power I learned myself, only the dungeon's power was suppressed.

As I initially said, her ability was something like a blessing that removes impurities. It did not allow her to completely erase the targeted power. Skills that the dungeon greatly influenced were weakened, while skills that were closer to my own ability were affected only slightly. That was the reason my Spear Technique and Peruta Circuit received very little suppression.

The next thing I found out was her ability's influence on items which wasn't purely the dungeon's authority. It was simple. Her ability couldn't affect items at all. Of course, when she first released her power, my chaos flames subsided. However, that wasn't because of her ability. When I detected her power, I immediately weakened the chaos flames to make it seem like her

ability was working. It was a trick to fool her.

She assumed that chaos flames came from a skill, and I was the one who made her think this way. I had a hunch that whether she knew chaos flames could be suppressed or not would have a great impact on the battle's result.

To confirm my suspicion, I checked whether the Echo Ring worked when I used Frozen Roar, and I became certain that her ability couldn't affect an item's inherent ability.

In that case, rather than being the result of the dungeon or the Dungeon Lord's power, the miraculous powers within Unique, Epic, and higher grade items could be theorized to be the result of the items' materials and their creators' miraculous ability. However, I thought there was more to it.

As items were objects that existed in real life, it could have just been that they weren't influenced as much by the dungeon, like my Spear Technique and Elementalist skills. It was also likely that Lespina's ability wasn't perfect. As I said before, if her ability was perfect, she would have taken away my qualification as an explorer.

If that happened, I would have become like Desert Scorpion's guild master. Of course, I wouldn't be as weak as him, but it was still terrible to lose the stats and league I gained through the dungeon. For now, at least.

The last thing I found out was that her power only activated

within the range of her realization. I deduced that her ability wasn't activating continuously, but instead was an active skill that could only be used when she could clearly perceive her target. Ironically, it was as if her ability was a skill. To erase skills, she had to use her own skill.

I became completely certain of this when she resisted Crimson Roar. I could have finished her off without revealing anything, but I needed to obtain more information in case another enemy like Lespina appeared.

I hope the dungeon will reward me for this...

However, Lespina was more tenacious than I thought. From the spear penetrating her stomach, lightning from Peika's power, Lightning God's power, and Zeus' power crackled and chaos flames blazed, but she still held on without dying.

[If I can kill you... Kuhak! Before my life ends...!]

“Sorry, but I've considered everything.”

If her ability was a skill-like power, there was something she had to do – concentrating. Skills were rather tricky to use. If one wasn't concentrating, they couldn't be used so easily. How long did it take me to use skills without saying their names out loud? Of course, there was a period of time when I thought I had to shout their names to use them, but that was partly because it was that difficult to use skills silently.

Throughout our battle, Lespina shouted or performed specific actions whenever she used her ability. It meant she had her own trigger for using this ability. However, Zeus' divine power and chaos flames were both effective in dealing great shock to their target.

There was a reason I didn't use Sacrifice. It was to avoid sharing her pain. It would have been fine if I could kill her with Sacrifice, but if she didn't die, I would writhe in pain with her and die if she recovered first. Furthermore, if she recognized Sacrifice as a skill and defended against it, I might have taken a fatal blow while she avoided the bonus damage from Sacrifice entirely.

Now, however, Lespina was completely incapacitated, and I had regained my power, stats, and skills as an explorer. This only meant one thing.

“How is it? Can you move?”

[You... Die!]

I looked down at her from above. Overlord's authority had healed my wounds and Enigma's power raged, making me surge with power. My Evil Eyes flashed, and Lespina became more and more restricted.

[Do you think... I can't kill you!?]

“You can't. Look at my eyes. Am I using a skill?”

[What nonsense are you spouting now...!?!]

When she looked into my eyes, I activated Lilith's Temptation. When Lespina felt that something was off, she shut her eyes and looked away. Wrong! You should have activated your ability and fought off Lilith's Temptation! Though I'm the one who baited you, I see that you're an idiot until the end!

[You used Lilith's Temptation! You stole 50% of the target's health and magic!"]

[The target falls under 'absolute obedience', forever becoming your servant.]

.....

"Eh?"

It worked! I didn't prepare myself for when it failed, but I didn't think absolute obedience would activate. After all, it only had a 20% chance of activating! Wasn't this the reason I went through all this to get the answer from her body!?

To think the skill I used as a finishing blow would do this! I felt depressed, thinking my hard work was wasted. It would have been nice if I knew beforehand... Damn it. Well, that didn't mean I would keep her alive. Demons had to be killed. All of them.

[I, I...? Uuu...?]

“Whatever.”

I'd just stolen half of her health, but she still had time before she died. I smiled and approached her.

“Alright then, let's hear the remaining info. I like peaceful talks, too.”

[Kuhuk... Yes, Master...!]

With chaos flames still burning, there's no way you'll live though.

[Lespina-nim has been captured! Rescue her!]

[Even if we all die, we must save her!]

Although the enormous exchange of mana prevented anyone from freely interfering in our fight, now that the situation was mostly cleared up, the demons thought I captured Lespina and charged at me crazily. Laki, who was still in the air, and the Revival members, who were on the ground, all moved to stop them, but it was difficult to suppress all of them.

I glared at Lespina and spoke in a whispering voice.

“Lotte, Ruyue, Peika, Sharana.”

[Understood.]

[Un!]

[Huhu, we’re free to do what we want?]

[As Master wishes!]

“No, don’t just go.”

I activated Succubus Queen’s Tattoo and doubled my mana. Although Overlord was ending soon, my mana shot up endlessly. I gave it to the elementals and rubbed Lotte with a highest grade potion. Lotte growled with a pleased voice.

“Are you all healed now?”

[Kuhum... Not yet, I think.]

“Go already, jeez.”

Having an idle chat with Lotte, who once submitted to survive, made me happy. After sending them off, I stopped worrying about them and looked back at Lespina. She was still burning up.

“How many minutes do you have until you die?”

[5 minutes... If even that, Master.]

“Good, then during that time, tell me everything about the Demon Army’s movements.”

[Yes, sir.]

At that moment, I felt a powerful magic flying towards us from a distance. Even though it carried a terrifying power, it was incredibly fast! In terms of modern weaponry, it was like a sniper bullet. I could understand how Lotte and the elementals missed it. However, I didn’t lose to anyone in speed, especially when I was using Overlord.

In an instant, I gathered Overlord’s remaining power and created a shield. Before Overlord deactivated, the shield blocked the incoming flame magic. It must have been a magic that exploded upon contact, but not even the Demon Lord could have accounted for Enigma’s power. Enigma enveloped the flame magic and silently disappeared like a candlelight.

Still... Flame, is it? I was curious why Lespina’s attribute was fixed to ice, but now, I felt like I could understand.

I faced the direction the flame magic came from and sent a message.

[Hwaya!]

[I'm already on it! Leave it to me and Ina.]

[Thanks.]

The flame user was undoubtedly planted by the Demon Lord. It was to be expected from someone in a position of power. A way to prevent their information from leaking out. In novels, villains usually carried bombs or poison on them, but it seemed the Demon Lord prepared an assassin like in a more traditional fantasy novel. A flame-attribute assassin, the opposite of Lespina, someone who could fire a single attack of extreme power.

Right, a demon with powerful mana such as Lespina couldn't possibly have more magic vested in them. With her power being what it is, it was probably necessary to have an assassin prepared.

“Lespina, is the Demon Lord in the Luka continent?”

[Yes. He is immersed in birthing new demons.]

“How many of them can erase the dungeon's power like you?”

[It is only me for now. However, he expected to create at least two more.]

“When will the Demon Lord come?”

[It is not certain yet. We predict that the pathway will become large enough for the Demon Lord to enter when the other force invading Earth and demons enter Earth two more times. He said it would take at most two years.]

“How about at least?”

[One year.]

I felt stifled for breath. However, I grit my teeth and asked again.

“Why isn’t the Demon Lord satisfied with obtaining one world’s power? Why is he aiming for other worlds? Ah, before that, was it just a coincidence that Earth was chosen as his target? Or was it because I went to the Luka continent as a Dimensional Mercenary?”

[The Demon Lord didn’t know where he was invading or who would be there. We only found out that Master was on Earth during the invasion process. However...]

“However?”

She spoke. I widened my eyes and asked again. She gave the same answer.

The missing piece of the puzzle was finally found, and everything

fell into place. I could finally open the eyes I had closed since I was born.

Chapter 261. You Cannot Escape from the Saintess (1)

The demons remaining in Australia went crazy when Lespina was swallowed by inextinguishable flames. They all charged towards me as if they had lost their minds.

[Kill him.]

[Kill him.]

[Kill him.]

[Kill... him!]

As I faced them, I felt that something was off. Intelligent beings didn't throw away their lives so easily. Although I didn't plan on letting a single one survive, in their perspective, it made more sense to retreat and come back later after reorganizing.

Since the enemy were demons rather than monsters, I thought this would be their natural course of action, but they all charged at me without caring for their lives. Their tenacity even sent a chill down my back.

As they detonated their mana when they got near, even with Revival members doing their best to stop them, there were many instances where my life was threatened. Since I used Overlord,

which was my greatest secret weapon, I only had my physical body left to fight with. However, some two hundred thousand demons left in Australia were already here or were running here.

[If you're tired, be honest and go rest at the guild house! We're free to move back and forth from here now!]

[If we leave, it'll get tougher for you, idiot! They're clearly all aiming for you. Do you think we won't notice you trying to solve everything by yourself!?!]

When I messaged the guild members with worry, Hwaya shouted back angrily. Her entire body was burning with blazing flames.

“Everyone, do your best so Shin stops his nonsense! Don't die either, because if you do, I'll kill you myself! Agni's Seven Tongues!”

When she reached out with her hands, seven giant streams of white flames rose up in the sky. I see, so there was more to Agni's power than what she showed last time! Just like how Zeus' power had two forms or how Shiva's power had three forms, Agni's power also had multiple forms.

If the power Hwaya used last time created divine flames, the power she used this time was even simpler. Pure destruction! Seven Tongues flickered from the sky to ground and destroyed all demons in their paths.

What was more shocking was that these tongues even attacked allies. Worried about a guild member dying, I prepared myself to use Caduceus, when I widened my eyes in shock. Ye-Eun, who was struck by a tongue, had appeared unscathed in flames.

“Wow, my wounds disappeared!”

“Huhu, how’s this Unni’s power?”

“Awesome, Unni! I want it too!”

Right, Ye-Eun’s wounds were healing. In other words, Agni’s flames harmed enemies and healed allies. It was a truly worthy of being a god’s power.

“Hang in there, everyone! No matter how many demons there are, our victory is certain! Guardian and Freedom Wing’s allied troops will come here soon! Other Revival members are coming too!”

“Uoooooooooh!”

“I’ll save everyone!”

As Hwaya’s voice filled with divine power rang out in the battlefield, other members cheered in return. Since they seemed so full of energy, I assumed they were fine. With a bitter smile, I fought off the demons in front of me. The Demon Lord must have done something to them. With a far more barbaric and brutal

method... His goal must have been...

“I’ll worry about that later! Fight me, you bastards!”

I fought against powerful enemies countless times as I climbed Beyond! Be it two hundred thousand or five hundred thousand, I’ll fight you all! The whirlpool swirling around me became fiercer than ever as it gathered around my spear and ripped apart three demons in the next instant. Maintaining this momentum, I shouted as I cut down more demons.

“We are Revival! Damned demons or monsters, let’s fight!”

From then, it took four days to clear Australia and the rest of Oceania. Two members of Revival lost their limbs and had to be healed by combined efforts of Ilayda, Ludia, and Elixirs.

As I fought hundreds of demons at the same time, I carelessly had my right arm crushed, but the ‘Flesh Golem’s Second Finger’, which I had obtained a long time ago, activated and regenerated my arm before anyone worried.

As Pure Black Desire was indestructible, although my arm was crushed inside it, the armor looked unfazed. Because of it, no one else even noticed that I had lost my arm.

“Kang Shin... A part, died. Definitely, died.”

However, it seemed Daisy’s sixth sense figured something out. I

desperately tried to hide my thoughts, but whether it succeeded was another story. Daisy rubbed my right arm a few times and tilted her head before leaving. Daisy, she was truly a mysterious woman...!

Although Revival suffered little, Guardian and Freedom Wing's casualties was disastrous. Both in numbers and strength, the demons had overwhelmed them.

As Australia's citizens mostly lived in coastal regions, they couldn't escape from the Demon Army's sudden attack and died. There were even less survivors than in New Zealand. In the end, it was a victory that no one could be happy about. Since Two Moon, it became one of the top five tragedies, and the worst tragedy since Guardian and Freedom Wing were founded.

"It's only been two years or so since monsters first appeared, and everyone's been too relaxed. With this incident, such thoughts will..."

"It's fine, I know what you're trying to say."

I embraced Hwaya and consoled her. It was good that humanity became more aware of the danger, but the cost we had to pay was too great. Furthermore, although they may not know it yet, we didn't have much time left. No matter how much they prepared for the eventual fight against demons and monsters, there was very little they could do given the short time.

However.

“With our power, we can stop it. So just keep doing your best.”

“Can we, Shin? We couldn’t stop even a portion of the Demon Army, and this is what happened. There are still incomparably stronger demons and even monsters we have to worry about... I want to smack my past self. I got too overconfident when I first got my ability.”

“We can do it. Trust me.”

Hwaya widened her eyes at my confidence, then smiled.

“Un. If Shin says so... I’ll trust you.”

With that, she got out of my arms and clenched her fists.

“I can’t just act like a baby. I’m going back to the dungeon.”

“You should rest today.”

“No, I’m not tired physically and... my mental exhaustion just disappeared. I’m off.”

With that, she made a cute smile. Then, her expression suddenly changed as if she stepped on feces. With a slightly sharp expression, she pinched my cheeks.

“Also, the way you think is very cruel.”

“W-What!?”

“See!? You know what I’m talking about, so you’re acting like you’re oblivious. If the current situation wasn’t what it was... Well, it is how it is, so I’ll forgive you. Still, you’re cruel. Making a girl say this first.”

“I... I don’t know what you’re talking about...”

I seated and turned away from her. This demoness!

“Ehew, I should have made you sign the papers. Because the man I fell in love with is so great, I have to go through all this trouble. Really, it’s not like I can just stop now.”

Hwaya kept complaining, but I figured it was on the lighter side. I stood silently, feeling awkward, when Hwaya said her last words.

“... I’m on your side, so cheer up. I think I know what you’re feeling.”

“Mm? You also have someone else you—”

“Not that, idiot! I’m talking about the current situation between Earth and the dungeon! I’m already upset, do you want to make me

even more upset!?”

In the end, she hit me. Damn... If only I stayed quiet!

First, I returned to the dungeon. It was to fight the First Dungeon's 80th Floor Master. During the 4 weeks I spent cleaning up Antarctica, I diligently climbed the First Dungeon and Beyond, breaking through the First Dungeon's 79th floor and Beyond's 29th floor. After that, I got so busy that I didn't have the time to fight the Floor Master. I had no choice but to delay the dungeon until everything was taken care of.

Five months had passed since the first time Loretta talked about the two year time period. Now, however, that time wasn't certain, and it was better to think I only had one year left. The invaders were breaking into Earth like they were being chased by someone, and the Demon Lord and the other enemies had way too many suspicious things about them.

To protect Earth and to protect my loved ones, what I needed was absolute power. A power that no one could take away from me, a power that purely belonged to me. I vowed to obtain a power like that.

“Eh? You're giving up on grinding elixirs?”

“Yeah. I'm at a point where a few dozen stat points can't solve the problem I have. They helped when I was climbing the lower floors, but now, they're just numbers. What I need more is a more certain league.”

“Shin-nim... You’re right. I wanted Shin-nim to have more time to think about things, but considering Earth’s current situation, that sounds right. Yes, raise your league. I will support Shin-nim to the best of my abilities.”

Loretta accepted my idea and nodded. I turned away with a grin. In front of my eyes were the stairs leading up to the 80th floor. The next time I see Loretta will be after I defeat the 80th Floor Master.

“Shin-nim, don’t you need to hear about the 80th Floor Master?”

“I have a guess. I’m pretty certain I won’t be wrong.”

Starting from the 76th floor, undead monsters reappeared. They were incomparably stronger than the undead I faced in the lower floors. There were giant zombies, ghouls, and even apparition type undead that randomly popped out of nowhere and scared me. Moreover, the chances of elite monsters appearing increased and stopped me from underestimating the First Dungeon.

An undead monster that would be the boss of them all... I would have to face 80th floor’s monsters first, but I had a guess in mind.

Suddenly, Loretta grabbed me and asked cautiously. Her face was a bit red.

“Shin-nim, do you need a blessing?”

“No, but just give me a kiss. Rather than a blessing, I want Loretta’s pure encouragement.”

“Shin-nim, you changed. You can say something so sly now.”

“If you hate it, you don’t have to.”

“I don’t hate it! I love it, I love it!”

In the end, Loretta even gave me a blessing. I didn’t know whether it was the power of Loretta’s kiss or the power of her blessing, but I could easily break through the 80th floor filled with dullahans and skeleton knights. Then, I came to face an unusually big door to the Floor Master battle room.

“Floor Master... Alright, let’s go.”

What reason did I have to wait? I kicked open the door without hesitation, and shouted.

“Let’s fight!”

On an incredible dark and cold land, a voice rang out from the depths.

[Good. Let’s fight.]

He appeared covered in a black aura, carrying a great sword in one hand, and wearing a black armor. The glow of this crimson eyes shining through the gap in his helmet showed that he was threatening, that he wasn't just for show.

The most perfect highest ranked undead monster, the Death Knight, had appeared.

Chapter 262. You Cannot Escape from the Saintess (2)

[I've faced countless challengers, and only a handful are allowed to pass through. Most tried to defeat me in groups, and less than 10% were brave enough to challenge me alone. Among them, those who eventually defeated me with their powers alone could be counted on my fingers. Of course, none managed to break my sword in our first fight.]

He pointed towards me with his black greatsword and spoke with a deep voice.

[I wonder which type you are.]

“You're quite cooperative to the dungeon, aren't you?”

I held my spear up and asked. The Death Knight then laughed in a dreary voice.

[Cooperative? Young warrior, let's say I rebel against the dungeon. Is there anything I can do?]

“There isn't?”

[No. There is no future for those who have become undead. There is no path to walk, no stairs to climb, what am I to do against someone I can't reach with my sword!? The only thing I

can do is enjoy battle and sink dreaming warriors into despair! Come before I lose interest. You will become one of the countless fools who despair in the face of my sword!]

All Floor Masters were powerful. No matter how high one's stats were or how many skills one had, it was hard to ignore a Floor Master's move. The Death Knight was in a different league than even them.

[If you are not careful, you will die in an instant.]

Black aura rose ominously from the greatsword the Death Knight held up. Just like chaos flames, it seemed to be a different power and not pure aura. To face it, I also ignited my chaos flames.

“I'm coming.”

[Ha!]

Shooting forth like lightning, I thrust my spear to pierce straight through the Death Knight's helmet. However, the Death Knight's greatsword received my spear just before. My stats had unknowingly even surpassed Floor Masters' stats, but this wasn't the case against the Death Knight. My spear was being pushed back little by little. However, the Death Knight seemed to be the one who was more surprised.

[You're strong. Abnormally strong.]

“Are you... making fun of me!?”

I pulled my spear back, used Divine Speed, and stabbed his great sword consecutively. It seemed even he couldn't follow Divine Speed, as he faltered back. Continuing with this momentum, I continued to attack him.

“Huaaaap!”

[Hmph!]

The Death Knight, who was continually pushed back, suddenly changed his stance and struck down with his greatsword. He was aiming precisely for the tip of my spear. In other words, he had read my spear's movements. However, I didn't stop and continued. When his great sword and my spear clashed, he opened his mouth.

[Breath of Death!]

“Ruyue!”

[Freeze!]

The black mist coming out of his mouth froze in the air. At the same time, I kicked him away.

“That's dirty, you son of a bitch!”

[Kuk!]

The Death Knight soon regained his posture and swung his greatsword, shooting out an aura wave. I stopped charging towards him and jumped back, borrowing Ruyue's power once more. The Death Knight's aura struck the ice barrier Ruyue created and dyed the ice black. As the ice barrier melted, the black water let out a horrid stench. Seeing it, I nodded.

“How simple.”

Anything touched by that aura rotted. Seeing how Ruyue hid behind my back frightened, it seemed it could even damage spiritual bodies. It was truly a deadly breath.

[You shouldn't have time to dawdle!]

“Ha!”

He was quick and powerful. His techniques were in the realm of experts, so fighting him was harder than fighting enemies who only had large bodies. Perhaps, those with a shallow understanding of martial arts might think that the Death Knight is an easier opponent than the Dragon Zombie. After all, people who couldn't understand the depth of the Death Knight's techniques would be more fearful of an opponent possessing larger and tougher bodies and bountiful mana! Only someone like me, who had the ability to exchange attacks with the Death Knight, would understand the Death Knight's real capabilities.

Just like he did before, I swung my spear in a wide arc and shot a horizontal wave of chaos flames. Just like how I was wary of his aura, he was also wary of mine. He immediately jumped up and easily dodged my attack. Then, with the addition of his falling weight, he flew towards me swinging his great sword.

[Is this it!?)

“Of course not!”

Just like what he did before, I also stabbed my spear precisely where his sword blade was. As the Death Knight’s eyes slightly widened, chaos flames danced and scorched his aura, climbing up to his arm. The Death Knight immediately noticed what was happening. His eyes glowed ominously, and a chilling aura shot out from his body.

[Arrogant!]

“Show me everything you’ve got! Don’t tell me you’ve got nothing left!”

Even if I didn’t plan on grinding elixirs, I still needed to obtain his equipment. Floor Master skills were still valuable. Overlord, which was one of my most important powers, was a result of synthesizing skills. Who said another skill like it couldn’t come out?

In that case, I needed to defeat him ten times a day for just one

day, or two days at most. If I discovered all of his attack patterns in our first fight, I would have an easier time afterward. I didn't know what the Death Knight felt from my words, but he released thick aura from his entire body and spoke in a displeased tone.

[You underestimate me...!]

The aura emanating from his body shot up as if it exploded. Sticky black aura rose up from his great sword and blazed like chaos flames. Without me saying anything, Ruyue shrieked and shot out ice spears, and the Death Knight blocked them without even moving. The aura staying in his sword rose and split automatically and devoured all ice spears coming his way. In an instant, all ice spears melted and became absorbed into his aura.

[I'll show you the power of curse I gained in exchange for becoming an undead!]

“Curse, you say.”

I circulated Peruta Circuit strongly. A platinum aura swirled above Pure Black Desire, and a whirlpool containing chaos flames separately swirled above my spear. In response, the few streaks of aura dancing on the Death Knight's greatsword halted momentarily.

My Peruta Circuit was still level 9. How would it be when I mastered it? Hundreds and thousands of times a day, I was tempted to put in my skill points to master it. However, I instinctively knew that the result wouldn't be pretty if I didn't

master it with my own power, so I barely held on. Peruta had also given me a similar advice.

Next, I infused Sharana into my body and strengthened the whirlpools as I charged towards him.

“Give me that power!”

[You... A Hero, you're a Hero!]

When he saw the platinum aura around my body, the Death Knight's glowing eyes became a level fiercer.

[Death Cross!]

“Divine Speed!”

A cross-shaped aura brimming with curse swept towards me. I immediately concluded that Ruyue's barrier wasn't enough to block it, and using Divine Speed, I jumped into the air. However, his aura was also flying towards me there.

[Is that it!?!]

Without answering him, I utilized the duration of Divine Speed to dodge his attack. Then, I shot the aura in my spear towards him like a bullet. It seemed he didn't expect me to dodge his aura, as he let his guard down and was struck by my aura. The Death Knight's

helmet partially broke, and his rotting head appeared through the cracks.

[You moved in the air!? Are you a magician!?!]

“I’m an Elementalist, you idiot!”

[Kuk, I’ll dye your elementals in curses, too!]

“Try it if you can!”

With chaos flames burning his helmet, he looked even more ominous. Even so, since he wasn’t a dullahan, he shouldn’t be able to move if I send his head flying!

I swung my spear with the sole purpose of swallowing his head with chaos flames. As expected, his great sword met my spear, creating a resounding metallic ringing. With ordinary spearmanship, I couldn’t find an opening in his defense. His swordsmanship was the greatest of all monsters I’ve met so far! After exchanging sword for spear once more, I made some distance and murmured.

“But with just that...”

[Kuooooo! Dark Needle Arrow!]

At that moment, a countless number of black needles shot up

from the ground underneath me. Ruyue, who noticed it earlier, created a bed of ice under me, but some needles managed to break through the ice and even my platinum whirlpool, stabbing into my armor. Even though I wasn't hurt, I felt heavier. It seemed his curse also worked on items.

[Will you be able to defeat me with that heavy body, Hero?]

“You talk too much.”

Without moving from that place, I pulled my spear back and took my stance. I mostly finished analyzing him. His swordsmanship was certainly excellent, but his fighting style put more emphasis on utilizing his aura and curse. He most likely had at least one more hidden card. However...

“I'll end this before you have the chance to use it.”

[Despair, and despair again! This is the greatest revenge I can exact in the dungeon!]

“You're a Death Knight... Why do you have to be so petty!?”

The whirlpool swirling around my spear lessened. It didn't get weaker, just that it became compressed to a single point. The platinum aura enveloping my armor had also moved to Chaotic Spear.

“Take this!”

Although it couldn't be called a proper Heroic Strike, if complete, it should be able to easily blow away a single the Death Knight! A partially incomplete spear attack hurled towards the Death Knight. He quickly rolled his body, dodging it, but I simply grinned in response.

[Don't think you can run away!]

Peika, who was on standby, shot up into the air and spread her arms out. A chain of golden lightning crackled out, binding together his four limbs.

[Kuk!?!]

[Master!]

“I know!”

Without a single moment of hesitation, I thrust my spear and shouted.

“Sacrifice!”

His helmet burst into pieces. The rotting skin and bones of a corpse appeared underneath. As dead blood shot up into the air, he let out a strange howl.

[Kiaaaaaaaak!]

“Kuk!”

So he really did have something left! In an instant, black mist surrounded his body. From it, large double-edged axes, razor-sharp scimitars, and other curse-ridden weapons shot out. Each of them was enough to threaten my life! Because of the effect of Sacrifice, I could only dodge them by the skin of my teeth.

[These are the grudge-filled weapons of all the warriors I defeated thus far! Your spear will soon become a part of it!]

“Funny. Too bad your weapon collecting hobby will end today!”

Even as I dodged the weapons with death just inches away, I had something else in mind. Is this... not copyright infringement?

“Whatever, let’s just kill him first!”

[You sure can talk for someone who’s about to die!]

Peruta Circuit became fiercer. As it healed my internal organs, which were damaged from Sacrifice, I leaped up. Weapons continued to shoot out, signifying the sheer number of warriors he killed. Dodging them skillfully, I shouted.

“You look like you’re about to die too! Stop resisting!”

[You will die first!]

I broke out into laughter. Because I had to defeat him multiple times today, I didn't use my pocket watch's skills or any other once-a-day skills. It seemed he was gravely underestimating me because of it. At this point, exhausting my power was a waste. Now that I understood his capabilities, all I had left to do was finishing him swiftly and cleanly.

At first, I wanted to hold out for a little longer to see how long this skill of his would last, but I decided to do that next time.

“Alright, I’m coming... Try to dodge this!”

[Come!]

I twisted my body in the air and shot towards him. Dodging all the weapons hurling towards me with Divine Speed, I focused my eyes on his ugly face. With my sole goal being to destroy it, I thrust my spear!

“Diiiiiiiiie!”

I gave up trying to fix my habit of shouting. Since it inadvertently became the guild's official rallying cry, I might as well keep pushing it!

Chapter 263. You Cannot Escape from the Saintess (3)

[You became level 81. You obtained 5 bonus stats.]

[You obtained the qualification to challenge Beyond's 30th floor.]

[You obtained 5 bonus stats.]

[You became Platinum Rank 9. You obtained the qualification to appoint one new explorer.]

[Amazing! You are the first in the First Dungeon's history to succeed in soloing the Death Knight on your first try! The dungeon will remember you as a great explorer. You obtained 2 skill point as reward. Current skill points: 51]

[You obtained the title, 'Death Knight Master.' All stats increase by 2. The title's effect will apply even if it's not equipped.]

[You defeated the Death Knight alone. You obtained the special reward, 'Death Knight's Helmet.']

[You obtained 700,000 gold.]

[You received the only reward left hidden for the First explorer. Congratulations! Your luck stat increases by 1.]

[Secret. Breath of Death]

After I defeated the Death Knight, Sherafina's message came along with the usual fanfare.

I finally became a Platinum rank explorer. The First Dungeon's Platinum rank! What once felt so far away was now in my grasp. Because of how quickly I climbed the dungeon, I still wasn't sure if it was amazing.

"Is this it? I thought I'd get more for becoming a Platinum ranked explorer."

Sherafina's unchanged tone annoyed me needlessly. That was definitely a recorded message! As I mused blankly, I flinched when I saw the first reward.

Breath of Death. This skill...

"Eh? Wait, mm, huh...?"

It took me a moment to remember what it was. This skill was the first skill Death Knight used, which easily got stopped by me! This weak skill was the secret reward!? Isn't that too lame for the First reward?

"I'll still learn it, but still..."

I grumbled as I learned the skill. The following message confirmed that I had received the skill Death Knight tried to use.

[You learned the skill, Breath of Death (Passive). During battle, you absorb and store death energy. You can then release the stored death energy at a target. You need to collect 10 or more death energy to use this effect. The more you collect, the more powerful the effect will be. Not using collected death energy can lead to ill consequences, and you can use this energy just like any other energies. You do not need to breathe it out.]

“Eh?”

Wait, this is different than what I thought it was! I thought it was a skill that let me breathe out deadly breath, but it seemed I was gravely mistaken. The inhaling process was also included.

During that process, I could collect death energy from those I killed and use it in other ways?

“This... Um...”

I practically just became a new Death Knight! What kind of a skill is this!? How amazing!

Breath of Death wasn't just an unusual skill. It let me control death energy, an energy I had not known about until now. Getting used to this skill and eventually making it surpass the realm of

skills to become my own power was up to my effort.

The best way to learn a new skill was to taken lessons from a proficient senior. Right, I already had a good senior.

“Let me see your death aura more closely! Death aura, show me your death aura!”

[What’s wrong with the challengers nowadays? Did they go mad from too much stress...?]

The Death Knight facing me tilted his head worriedly as he lifted up his great sword breaming with death aura. Facing it, I nodded happily. ‘Before I collected all of his equipment, I swear I’ll learn how to control death energy from him!’ I vowed to myself as I pointed my spear towards him.

“Welcome.”

[You equipped the Death Knight Set. Your strength and constitution increase by 50. When the Death Knight Set is equipped, you can use ‘Death Collection’ once per day.]

[When used, Death Collection summons weapons of enemies you defeated to attack your target. The more you killed, the more powerful their weapons were, the more powerful the skill will be. Although it is possible to add your own energy to the summoned weapons, note that holy energy is not suitable for these weapons filled with resentment.]

I was lucky. I could collect all of Death Knight's equipment in one day as I didn't get any duplicates. Just like I expected, the set skill was the powerful skill Death Knight used at the end of our first fight. Enemies I defeated until now... There were too many for me to remember. However, most used their bodies as weapons rather than actual weapons! I doubted that an entire monster would pop out of that black mist.

"Ah, no, I massacred those demons last time."

When I thought about that, I felt hopefully. I remembered that almost no demons fought with bare hands, and suddenly had expectations for this skill. In any case, since I said I wouldn't grind Death Knights, I planned to stay true to my words. I already had an idea how to use death energy.

[Are you resting now?]

"Yep. You should rest too, Ruyue."

Of course, I still had a mountain load of work to do. The next thing on the list... Just thinking about it made my stomach churn.

At that moment, Ruyue suddenly approached me and spoke.

[Shin should incubate the egg now.]

“... Mm?”

Did I hear that right? I asked Ruyue to repeat what she said, but she seemed to have not heard what I said as she took out a metallic egg in the air. It was the egg born when Syrmia Bamirtuno died in the Luka continent.

Since the last time I saw it, the egg had gotten bigger and shinier. Setting aside the fact that that wasn't how eggs generally worked, I focused on the great mana it carried. It was understandable. All the needless equipment I gained until now had been eaten by that egg.

“Why me...?”

[It's going to hatch soon.]

“Really?”

[Un.]

Ruyue nodded. I looked down at the metallic egg in my hands worriedly.

My elemental skills were currently high-rank level 8. I had the feeling that I would be able to contract a new elemental when I mastered high-rank Elemental Contract. However, there weren't situations where Peika, Ruyue, and Sharana weren't enough, and I knew I didn't have enough mana to maintain four elementals. That was why I didn't use my skill points until now.

Even with my mana near 250,000 points, I still thought the same way. But could the egg have come to me, realizing my growth as an elemental? Just who was in this egg?

“Well, just thinking about it won’t give me any answers. I’ll just worry about it when the time comes... Alright, Ruyue, I’ll hold onto the egg now.”

[Un!]

Even though the egg had gotten bigger, it wasn’t to the point that I couldn’t carry it around. I put the egg into my embrace, sent the elementals back, and left the dungeon. If I met Loretta, I felt like I might become too relaxed to continue with my next plan.

Right.

I was going to meet Ciara Kenex.

[Hero-nim, you’ve gotten more imposing since the last time we talked!]

“You said the same thing last time too. You’re the one who grew a lot.”

I met her when I went to clear an Event Dungeon in America, and in just half a year, Ciara had gotten a lot taller. She still looked

fairly frail, though.

I immediately came to regret what I said. Ciara acted like she was on cloud nine.

[You noticed my growth! Aaah, I'm so happy! Hero-nim likes me too!]

"I'll say it again. I hate you, and it pains me to be talking to you right now."

I couldn't say it enough. I hated her. First, I hated the fact that she liked me so much. The unacceptable reason was that I was the Hero and she was the Saintess. She projected her ideal image of a Hero onto me and wanted me to fulfill that image. Most importantly, her image of a Hero was an utter piece of trash. This Hero was the type of person who would sacrifice others for his benefits.

[I've heard all about Hero-nim's achievements! Hero-nim is doing great, but that's not good. As it is, Hero-nim will take on everything into Hero-nim's own hands. Hero-nim must get rewarded for...]

"Ciara."

[Yes, Hero-nim!]

Ciara stopped and turned towards me. Her telepathy irritated

me, but it was a bit funny that she acted like a puppy. The fact that it only took her three hours to arrive at the guild house from the time I contacted her proved it.

“You should know about it too. About the dungeon.”

[Yes! I finally understood that what Hero-nim asked about back then wasn't the dungeons appearing on Earth, but another world in Hero-nim's possession! But that isn't a very important place, right? It's just a place for Hero-nim to grow. No, I guess it's easier to gather people from there... Mmm...]

Ciara acted unconcerned, but she couldn't be. The dungeon was a mystical place with a more complex structure than the monsters or demons invading Earth. As a place where explorers could obtain great powers, it was currently at the center of Earth's attention. I couldn't understand how Ciara could be so nonchalant about it.

That said, since I didn't really want to understand how Ciara's mind worked, I quickly continued with what I wanted to say.

“You can get stronger by entering the dungeon. Although you'll have to prove your ability to go forward, you'll be given the chance to grow at the very least.”

[Isn't that power fake? No matter how much I think, I can't help but think that it's someone else's power!]

I guess she's not a Saintess for nothing. She was right on the

mark. However, I smirked and retorted.

“If you forcibly put on clothes, your body can grow to fit them. Not everyone can do this, but I can. This is what’s important. Once the path opens up once, following it isn’t hard.”

[So Hero-nim is using the dungeon! Do you have plans to seize the dungeon? I will support Hero-nim with all my power!]

She must have been a great general in her past life. For someone who looked so well-behaved, she was beyond aggressive.

“As I said, it’s not something everyone can do. The enemies we’re facing... Right, we.”

[Hero-nim, I’m so happy! You finally understand me! Yes, we!]

I held myself back from running out.

... Can I just kill her? No, Shin, hold yourself in, be patient. It’s for the greater good. Yup.

“The enemies we’re facing can nullify the dungeon’s power. At first, I thought I could deal with it myself, but things have changed. Things are getting unpredictable, so I need a way to predict what’s coming... I need you.”

[Yes, of course! I’ve been waiting for the day to join Hero-nim!]

Ciara threw herself at me, as if to give her entire self along with her ability. I smacked her head and continued.

“From now on, obey me absolutely. Don’t do things on your own.”

I didn’t like to control people. It’s what Ciara wanted me to do, too. But I hated controlling people against their will, so I had no qualms saying this to Ciara. What she did made me grit my teeth even now.

[But Hero-nim.]

“First, cut your ties with your family.”

[That’s impossible. My clan has always used me, and even now...]

“Then I’ll cut it off for you. Also, I don’t need the organization you’re forming. Get rid of it.”

[Hero-nim...!]

Ciara couldn’t say anything. Perhaps this was the first time I made her speechless without resorting to force. I felt a strange sense of victory and continued.

“You’re too weak right now. You have to get stronger.”

[But Hero-nim, I hate the dungeon.]

“Eh? What does that mean?”

What she said was so absurd that I tilted my head.

“I never told you to enter the dungeon.”

Chapter 264. You Cannot Escape from the Saintess (4)

Ciara blinked with a confused expression. I could call it cute, but because of my aversion towards her, she only looked hateful no matter what she did. However, now was the time to set aside my feelings. I let out a dry cough and continued.

“I already told you. What was the reason I needed your help?”

[Because enemies that could nullify the dungeon’s power appeared... right?”

“Yeah.”

[And that’s why Hero-nim called me. To read their movements and prepare beforehand.]

“Right.”

[Then for me to get stronger, shouldn’t I...]

“No, no.”

I shook my head. Of course, Sherafina told me I needed to make Ciara a dungeon explorer. However, that’s because Sherafina didn’t know about Lespina.

The Dungeon Lord wasn't a god. She wasn't omnipotent, nor was she omniscient. Her suggestion was reasonable, but not in this case. Against enemies that could ignore the dungeon's power, how could we fight them with the dungeon's power? That was partly why I gave up on grinding stats! Easily raised levels from the dungeon? They were different. Rather than the sweet fruit given as a reward for completing the dungeon's tests, I wanted the tests themselves.

For this reason, climbing the dungeon was beneficial for combat type ability users. There was a huge difference between those who experienced combat and those who didn't. Those who won against powerful enemies gained experience different from the levels the dungeon gave. I considered this another aspect of one's league. I believed that this was also the reason so many gods had their eyes out for me.

However, Ciara was different. She was frail. Most likely, the limit of her physical strength was picking up a knife and a fork. Her underdeveloped body could be easily seen from the outside. Although she carried a special and boundless mana, she could only use it when she used her ability. Most of the time, it was just leaking out of her body. Her mana wasn't being used. Setting aside her talent for magic, she had never even wielded her mana.

Even she entered the dungeon, what could she do? Of course, if I paired her with another ability user, it would be possible to make her stronger. During that process, Sherafina would most likely read Ciara's ability and help her develop it. However, as I said before, such an ability was useless in front of enemies like Lespina. It might not even activate properly.

“How much did your ability grow?”

[The range increased by another 20km radius.]

“So it’s still growing?”

[Yes, Hero-nim. My ability gets stronger the more I use it. I don’t know the origin of it, though.]

“Good, then I have an idea.”

When I felt confident I could develop her ability, I took out a piece of paper. It was a Soul Contract.

[I can feel an amazing power from it... and an ominous aura.]

“Yeah. I can’t trust you so easily, so it’s a failsafe method...”

At that moment, I hesitated. Then, I fell in thought. Ciara couldn’t see with her eyes, but she realized what I was doing and turned to face me. I could call her action admirable, but because of my aversion towards her... The rest didn’t need to be said.

I asked.

“Why do you like me?”

[Because it's my fate!]

I hate... No, endure it.

“What I said before, can you do it?”

[I don't think it's very efficient. If Hero-nim allows it, I'll look for another method. There's a lot to be prepared for the world Hero-nim will rule!]

“Can you still do that after cutting ties with your family?”

[It'll be slightly more difficult, but I can do it! As long as I have the authority to grant abilities, I can coerce ability users to... Ehem. In any case, it's possible!]

“Rejected.”

[Uuu... Okay.]

“I'm going to put an observer on you. Is that fine?”

She did not give an immediate answer. She then tilted her head and asked.

[The object Hero-nim took out can restrain my actions, correct?]

“Right. It can even restrain the way you think. It’s a scary object.”

[Then why would Hero-nim not use it and put an observer on me instead?]

It was a fair question. Did I feel bad about using the Soul Contract on Ciara? Not in the slightest. I had already used Soul Contracts on many people. As long as the contract’s terms were kept, a Soul Contract was nothing more than a piece of paper, something that didn’t pose much danger. If the target was Ciara, I didn’t really need to hesitate.

Even so, this was the decision I came to.

“No, I thought I shouldn’t continue using Soul Contracts on my allies.”

[I’m touched, Hero-nim! I finally became Hero-nim’s woman! Aaah, I’m so happy!]

“Don’t change the topic.”

Ciara was trembling from elation. Although seeing her gave me the chills, I knew I could restrain her even without using a Soul Contract.

The reason was simple. She... Kuhum, she liked me way too much. In the end, her every action was for my benefit. She accepted any sacrifice and justified any action if it was in my favor. That's why I didn't want to be involved with her. I was afraid she would do something I couldn't control.

However, that wasn't the case now. I had more than enough power to control her actions. There was a reason to be afraid. Moreover, rather than avoiding what I feared and ignoring it, I knew it was better to keep it next to me and watch over it. This was the decision I came to after analyzing the data collected by the succubi's investigation.

"I'll say it again, get rid of the organization you've been forming."

[An enormous amount of money and manpower have already been used. I'm sure it will be of great help to Hero-nim's future!]

"I don't need it. Get rid of it. Or, you can just give it to your family and tell them to do what they want with it."

As I said that, I thought for a moment. The Kenex family would undoubtedly oppose me taking Ciara away. A tiny clash might happen in the process... and I can use this chance to get rid of this organization. Yep, that sounded like a good plan.

In any case, Ciara's answer was interesting.

[Yes! Then I'll make it so that we can regain control over them at any time!]

“That won't be needed. I already obtained everything I wanted. Including you.”

[... Yes.]

For some reason, Ciara twisted her body and blushed. I pondered which part of my statement caused her to act so annoyingly, but since I wasn't really interested in her, I just ignored it.

I put away the Soul Contract and thought how this was a good opportunity.

Some of Revival's members were still collared. Ilayda Van and Laz Michel... They were trustworthy people, but I wanted to watch over them for a little bit longer. However, Leon, Walker, and Sophie were already on Revival's boat and couldn't get off. Even setting that aside, I already knew what kind of people they were. Soul Contracts weren't needed. Putting collars on their necks was nothing less than an insult. I decided to get rid of them.

Walker might curse me and attack the moment he was freed from his Soul Contract, but getting hit once wouldn't be so bad. I could always return it a hundredfold too.

[Hero-nim, what are you thinking about? I want to hear it too!]

“No. In any case, from this moment on, you’re a member of Revival. Though, you won’t enter the dungeon.”

[A secret agent? Just for Hero-nim!?!]

“... Well, let’s call it a secret agent for Earth.”

I made a bitter smile and nodded. Then, I continued.

“I’ll be the one training you. Hwaya will also help. The two of us are skilled with handling mana, and it’ll help you develop your ability.”

[Hero-nim’s training... Can I go outside and calm myself from this excitement?]

“No. Don’t be excited. Don’t calm yourself down. Hwaya will be there too. Got it? Hwaya will be there! Don’t forget that!”

[I wish only Hero-nim was there...]

Just what did this girl eat to be so extreme at just thirteen-years-old!? I needed to hear the Kenex family’s education policy. Then, I’ll make everyone kneel and apologize.

“First, let’s open your eyes and mouth. It’s not my style to work people without properly reimbursing them.”

Except for Walker.

[Mm... This might be rude, Hero-nim, but can I say something?]

Ciara made a sorrowful expression that I'd never seen before as she shook her head.

[It's not that I want to doubt Hero-nim's words, but I've never been able to fix this disability I was born with.]

“Maybe you've only met bad doctors.”

[It was impossible with modern medicine. Even though mana stones and monster remains brought huge advancement in medicine and science, it wasn't enough to fix my eyes. It was the same for my mouth. They said that something unapproachable by science was blocking me. Something like a curse.]

“So?”

[The Kenex family and I tried mobilizing all healing ability users. The Kenex family is larger than what Hero-nim thinks. All healing ability users on Earth tried to cure me. One of them was Miss Ilayda Van, who is currently in Revival. No one could recover my sight, nor my voice. Although Miss Palludia wasn't one of them, I don't think she'll be different.]

“Mm, yeah, Ludia's power might not be enough.”

I shrugged.

“But I’m different.”

[Of course, I have the greatest faith in Hero-nim’s power! But Hero-nim, I don’t want to be disappointed at Hero-nim. I don’t want to be disappointed in myself, who is disappointed in Hero-nim. I’m happy as I am now. It’s fine.]

Ciara’s attitude was clearly unnatural. She was shaking her head like she was afraid of something. I had some doubts, then I remembered something obvious.

She was only thirteen.

She was smart and headstrong for her age, so I never considered her to be a thirteen-year-old. Right. She was young. The time she had might have been too short for her to naturally accept her disability.

From the day she was born, she couldn’t see, hear, nor talk. It seemed she accepted her disability as a payment for becoming an ability user. She acted proudly, and she never doubted her actions. Since she paid such a great price when she was born, she had no qualms about using the power she had. A saintess chosen by God... It made sense that that’s how she viewed herself.

Even so, it was hard to say she overcame her disability. In fact,

her actions showed how much of a complex she had towards her disability. Her current reaction proved this theory completely.

I became disappointed in myself. I knew that at the basis of her blind actions was her disability, but I had been carrying hostility towards her all this time.

I was rather proud of my ability to see through people for my age, but it seemed it was just a rookie's folly. I still had much more to learn in this regard. Who was I to judge people and hate them? I was only twenty two! It was good that I realized it now. Even if I didn't want to, my position required me to think and act this way.

Some of her actions were certainly unforgivable. She committed a crime that couldn't be justified in any way. I felt that her way of thinking wouldn't change, and so accepted my decision to restrain her actions. No matter how much good she did, since she would never repent for her sins, she would forever remain a sinner, and I would forever hate her. That's what I had thought.

Now, however, I felt like I saw a tiny potential. A way to open her heart, which, in some way, could never be opened or changed. Making her realize her faults and making her act on her own volition rather than for me.

Since I planned to do it anyways, there was no need to hesitate. I took out an Elixir from my inventory.

[This is...?]

“Ah, this won’t be enough. It’s a miraculous medicine, but it’s still a bit lacking to resolve your curse. It would be a waste to use two, so I’m only going to use one.”

I gave her a short reply and took a breath. After looking around, I nodded and muttered.

“Overlord.”

In an instant, the power of Enigma enveloped me. It automatically split itself for offense and defense, then followed the path of Peruta Circuit to circulate around my body. I grabbed this mana of Enigma mid-path.

[Hero-nim, what... what an amazing power. I can’t see you. Are you really there?]

“I’ll let you see with your own eyes soon.”

I grinned and focused entirely on the Elixir in my hand. I had considered it for a long time. Strengthening items with Enigma’s power.

It wasn’t impossible. At this moment, Enigma was mine. If I couldn’t use it as I wanted, how could I call myself its master? As if to prove this, Enigma’s mana followed my control, thoroughly entering the bottle of Elixir. Ciara, who couldn’t see, only trembled at the energy she felt.

“Done.”

[What... What do I need to do, Hero-nim?]

Ciara’s voice was shaking. I smirked and grabbed her tightly clenched fist. After opening it slowly, I put the bottle of Elixir on her hand. Then, she grabbed it carefully, afraid it would break.

“Just drink it.”

Finally, I controlled Enigma to open the bottle. With trembling hands, Ciara put the Elixir on her mouth. Then, she drank it all in one go. She didn’t doubt in the slightest. Her affection again gave me the chills. When she opened her eyes and saw me, would she see how I was different from her image, become disillusioned and lose her affection for me? Oh, please! Let that be the case! For a moment, I had a wishful dream.

Then, as if how she couldn’t open her eyes was a lie, she opened her eyes too naturally.

“Ah, aaah...”

“Ciara, you...”

The moment I saw her eyes, I realized why such a great curse was placed on her.

“Hero... nim...”

Large black irises that were as clear as the starry sky and a white cross clearly inscribed in each eye.

She was the only innate Evil Eyes holder birthed by Earth.

Author's note:

Shin and Hwaya obtained their Evil Eyes by raising their leagues and proving their qualifications. Other than Ciara, Loretta and Daisy are the only ones in the story born with innate Evil Eyes.

You understand why Ciara couldn't open her eyes or speak, right? And what ability that Evil Eyes has! After all, the ability of Evil Eyes can't be hidden just by closing one's eyes! Huhu.

Next chapter will have detailed explanations!

Chapter 265. You Cannot Escape from the Saintess (5)

At first, I was too shocked to say anything, but when I thought about it, her possessing Evil Eyes was natural. Right, she was possessed by a powerful curse that no advancement in science or medicine, or the highest rank healing ability could cure. It wouldn't make sense if it wasn't caused by something like Evil Eyes.

“Is it really you, Hero-nim?”

“I told you multiple times. My name is Kang Shin.”

“You really are Hero-nim...!”

“I see not listening to other people's words hasn't changed.”

Even though this was the first time she spoke since she was born, the way she naturally moved her lips and tongue was a bit scary. She was really like a princess freed from a curse, the kind told in fairy tales.

She undoubtedly possessed Evil Eyes since the day she was born. Evil Eyes was a terrifying authority that placed an immense burden on one's body. Back then, she should have had little to no mana in her body. Her body must have known that only death awaited her if she opened her eyes.

That's why she couldn't open her eyes. Because her sight wasn't enough, her hearing and voice had also been taken away. It wasn't a curse, but her desperate attempt to lessen the burden on her body. Of course, she never realized it.

I thought about explaining it, but I decided against it. I felt it would only encourage her self-aggrandizing way of thinking.

For some reason, however, Ciara was quiet. She could now see and speak. No matter how quiet she was before, it wouldn't be an overreaction for her to blabber on excitedly. Plus, if it was Ciara who always put an exclamation mark at the end of her sentence...

“Ciara?”

“Yes! Yes!”

No, I was wrong. She had never seen the world with her own eyes. It made sense that she was spacing out.

Suddenly, Ciara, who was looking at me, began to cry. I had expected her to become emotional, but it was still a surprise as tears weren't something I ever associated her with.

“Why are you crying? I told you I could fix it.”

“N-No. It's nothing, Hero-nim...! It, it's just...!”

Ciara didn't wipe her tears and only looked up at me. She then murmured quietly.

"Even... Even more, far more beautiful than I thought..."

"... That's good to hear."

There was no way that the world she drew in her heart was the same as the world she saw with her own eyes. Now, she could see and judge everything herself. Even if it wasn't to my extent... I hoped that she would come to recognize the value of others.

Feeling sympathy for Ciara for the first time, I reached out and stroked her hair. She didn't overreact and simply smiled. If only she could continue being this way... I felt a headache knowing that this wouldn't be the case.

Ciara regained her light and voice. In addition, her eyes were Evil Eyes from birth. Her power of foresight was simply the result of her inborn power awakening.

Her eyes could see the future. It was a simple ability, yet the consequences were immense. Just by opening her eyes, her ability came to surpass what it was before by far. If she put in an effort and controlled her eyes, there really might be nowhere that could escape her sight. Although she carried dangerous thoughts, as long as I was next to her, she would follow me. Revival had just gotten an irreplaceable ally.

However, Ciara's situation wasn't only good. As I said before, the reason she couldn't speak and had her eyes closed was that her body couldn't withstand her Evil Eyes. That was still the case now, even as an ability user.

Empowered by Enigma, the Elixir amplified the mana in her body and forced her body to its normal state. When the Elixir's effect ran out, her body would be burdened once again, perhaps even more than before. It was my mistake, as I had never considered the possibility of her possessing Evil Eyes. But since she opened her eyes, it was necessary to train her body, mind, and mana. Immediately.

Hwaya answered my request with a dying expression.

“Hateful...”

“Please, Hwaya. I'll do whatever you want.”

“You know full well I can't refuse you... Huu, it's for Revival too, so fine. I'll endure it.”

“Thank you so much.”

Ciara bowed to Hwaya. She had clearly gotten calmer after opening her eyes. Hwaya snorted as she retorted.

“First, let's work on controlling the mana inside you. Right now, it's all tangled up inside.”

“It’s because she can’t control it consciously. Her potential shouldn’t be bad... She’s the distributor of all abilities after all.”

“I hope so, Shin. I’m going to be a little rough, so give us some space. Four days.”

“Four days!?”

What is she planning on doing to this child!? Don’t tell me she’s going to vent her anger? Hwaya snickered seeing my worrying eyes.

“What? I’m the first person on Earth to systematically train in mana. Since I accepted her as a disciple, I can’t be soft even if she’s a kid. I need four days, so leave.”

With that, Hwaya sent me a message.

[I can roughly solve what you’re worried about in that timeframe.]

“... You’re really an amazing woman.”

“Yeah, I know.”

Hwaya nodded as if it was the most obvious truth. Then, she waved her hands without even looking at me. I smiled and left as

she wanted.

“Good luck, Ciara. I’ll take care of the rest.”

“Yes, Hero-nim. I’ll do my best! For Hero-nim!”

“No, do it for yourself, not me.”

Just like that, the witch accepted the saintess as a disciple at the request of the hero. What a mess.

After leaving Ciara to Hwaya, I went to find Walker. As I’d already talked to Hwaya and a few others, I didn’t need to hesitate to do what I planned.

“What’s up, Kang Shin? Your face is more unpleasant than usual.”

“Should I not?”

I messaged Walker beforehand, but it seemed he wasn’t in the dungeon anyway. With what happened last time with the Event Dungeons and the demons’ invasion, he was climbing the dungeon with determination, so it seemed my timing was good. When I visited him, Walker wasn’t in his house but was smoking outside.

It was noon. He would have been guarding Yua if it was the past. Although not much time had passed, I felt like many things had

changed. I made a bitter smile. Walker flicked his cigarette and spoke curtly.

“If you’re going to visit me, tell me beforehand.”

“I did.”

“Three or four hours before.”

“... Do you have another guest?”

“... No.”

Walker dodged my gaze. For a moment, his eyes looked at the second-floor window. The curtains were tightly shut as if to hide what was inside. Well, it didn’t matter. I told him what I came for.

“You don’t really need the Soul Contract anymore.”

“You’ve gotten bold, Kang Shin.”

“I just think I should trust who I can trust.”

“You? Me? I woke up too late to see it, but the sun must have risen from the west.”

“Walker, I need your agreement to destroy it. The Soul Contract,

let's destroy it.”

Ignoring Walker's drivel, I took out our Soul Contract and spoke with a clear voice. Walker widened his eyes and puffed a smoke. As he exhaled, he threw the cigarette away and nodded.

“Good, let's destroy it.”

Without me doing anything, the Soul Contract ripped to shreds. I could feel that the contractual bond between Walker and me disappeared completely. At that moment, Walker appeared behind me. His fist was enveloped in a black aura.

“Just let me hit you once...!”

“Rejected.”

No matter how much Walker grew, he wasn't my opponent. Because of how predictable he was, I couldn't let him hit me even if I wanted. I lightly brushed his neck with my elbow. Walker fell backward and cursed.

“Damn you, you're too uptight.”

“Thanks for the compliment.”

“Screw off. I'm going to go and let out all the curses I held back until now.”

“Yeah, you’re free to go.”

I smirked. As I was about to turn away, I realized I had something left to say.

“You’re the one who formed a Soul Contract with Sophie, right? Since the restriction is gone, you get rid of her contract too.”

“Got it.”

“I want to see her and say it myself, but since you’re outside, it must be troubling for her to meet someone at her current state.”

“Kuhuk!”

Walker coughed roughly. I smirked and dealt another blow.

“So, when can I eat my noodles? I love noodles, you know.”

“You son of a bitch...”

Walker gritted his teeth, while I walked out feeling better than ever before. I hummed happily.

It would be nice to take this happiness straight to Beyond’s 30th floor, but there was something I needed to do beforehand. It was

the sparring with Peruta that came about once a month. Since sparring with him periodically let me realize how much I improved, I had no plans to take it easy.

I immediately went to the Residential Area and headed to the basement training room. Sumire was the only one there, thrusting her spear into the air by herself. I was slightly surprised.

“Sumire?”

“Ah, Shin-nim!”

She welcomed me with a smile. I already knew this with how close she was with Hwaya, but between a dog and a cat, she was more like a dog. If she had a tail, I suspected it would be shaking 100 times per second.

“Did you come to train?”

“Yep, with Peruta.”

“I’ll leave, so feel free! Afterwards, can you spar with me...?”

“Of course. You’re so hard-working, Sumire.”

“I’m just doing what I can. Even in the last incident, many people got hurt because I couldn’t protect them. I don’t want that to happen again.”

She was so blindingly bright that I couldn't look at her. Shouldn't Sumire be the Saintess instead of Ciara?

“Plus, Athena has a spear-related ability too. I just can't use it because I'm not skilled enough. I have to obtain it before the next time Event Dungeons appear.”

“... Sorry for making you work so hard.”

“I know Shin-nim has it the hardest. I'm happy to just be of help!”

An angel!

“Ah, I took too much time. I'm off then. Call me when you're done sparring!”

“No, Sumire. You can just watch from the side.”

“Huh? But...”

“It's fine. You might learn something. Mmm, remember this though.”

I added with a wry smile.

“It’ll look like I’m dancing by myself.”

I stood in the center of the training hall with my eyes closed and called Peruta. He seemingly knew what I wanted, as he immediately created an Imagine World and faced me. A pleased smile was on his face.

“You’re heading to the next realm.”

“I want to arrive as quickly as possible. I have a lot to pay them back for.”

I held up my spear and took a stance. Peruta waved his hand as he retorted.

“My, impatience is a warrior’s taboo. Impatience leads to mistakes, and mistakes lead to losses. When a person becomes incapable of taking back what he lost, that’s when he becomes a Kahar.”

“I’ll take note. Though, I don’t know what a Kahar is.”

“Whoop, my bad. Kahar means disaster in my continent’s language. The kind of disaster that stays hidden, appearing suddenly and devouring everything. When a person becomes a Kahar, there will be nothing left, including himself. In the end, he’ll destroy even the things he wanted to protect.”

To be honest, it sounded cool.

“I’ll remember that.”

“Then remember this too. In another language, a Kahar is called the God of Vengeance.”

Peruta held up his spear, pointing it towards me and shouting sharply.

“Now, come! Throw away your impatience and thirst for revenge! For now, only think about reaching the peak of spearmanship!”

“Of course!”

Ten hours afterward.

My Mad Typhoon reached level 7.

Chapter 266. You Cannot Escape from the Saintess (6)

Peruta made a satisfied expression as I sent him off after our training. Next, I sparred with Sumire, who seemed to have learned a lot from watching me. Of course, she could never be my opponent. Even though I pretty much stopped thinking and sparred with the mindset of leading her spear forward, her spear couldn't reach me at all.

However, only half a year had passed since Sumire really began to train in spearmanship. Although she had the basics down from the family training she had when she was young, it was still only the basics. I remembered this clearly, as she sparred with me when she started training and watched her Spear Technique become mid-rank.

From sparring with me today, Sumire learned high-rank Spear Technique. Her improvement was easy to see, and I quickly ascertained that her spearmanship advanced to high-rank Spear Technique. I didn't know how Sherafina split mid-rank from high rank, but I could feel her advancement from her spear's movements. I knew she wanted to get stronger quickly, but her speed really surprised me.

“...”

“Thank you! Shin-nim is the best!”

“No, I don't think I did much.”

“If it wasn’t for Shin-nim, I would have never learned high-rank Spear Technique! Shin-nim is really amazing...!”

Sumire entered her worship mode. Though I was happy, I asked her with a bitter expression.

“Sumire, did you put in any skill points into Spear Technique...?”

“No. Didn’t Shin-nim say so? To not put in skill points into mana training skills or martial art skills.”

“Right. So you reached high-rank Spear Technique in half a year with just your own ability?”

“It’s more thanks to Shin-nim rather than my ability.”

Sumire spoke as she tilted her head. She believed it wholeheartedly. Just where did this worship-like faith come from? I don’t remember doing anything... Well, I guess I did. But she also participated, and so did the others...

Perhaps, this faith was what allowed Sumire to advance so quickly. I didn’t want to break her wings by carelessly saying something, so I gave up on continuing this topic. Instead, I made an offer.

“Sumire, focus for a bit.”

“Are you teaching me something!?”

Sumire approached me with sparkling eyes. If only Ren was half as trusting when he came to learn from me... Unfortunately, Ren’s idea of learning from me was equal to being beaten up, so this was impossible. I told myself to beat him up again in the coming days and focused my attention on Sumire.

“Rather than teaching... I’m offering a method.”

“Yes, I’ll do it!”

Failed. I wanted to leave it to her choice, but she was going to do whatever I asked. It was the first time I felt the weight of absolute faith.

‘I guess it’ll be okay as long as what I tell her is correct.’ I felt my responsibility increasing as I told her the method.

“To be honest, I didn’t think you would get so strong in such a short time. Without even a tiny bit of exaggeration, you’re a genius. You were already a genius in martial arts, but it seems you’re an even greater genius in spearmanship.”

“I’m nothing compared to Shin-nim. I’m still lacking!”

“No, trust me. Hubris is poisonous, but underestimating yourself

isn't good either. You have to look at yourself objectively if you want to improve quicker."

Sumire's face reddened from embarrassment. I smiled and held up my sword.

"Well, saying anything more will only tickle your ears. I'll be frank. Sumire, your defense is outstanding. With Athena's power, it could even be called absolute. You can probably even defend against one full power attack from me."

By full power, I meant using Overlord, Sacrifice, and Sky God's Rage. Mm, I guess she can't block Shiva's Eye, but since I can only use this power once a year, I shouldn't think about it. In any case, the fact that she could defend against this meant that she could perfectly defend against an attack from a world's enemy.

Although she wasn't at this level in the past, Sumire was always with us as we climbed the dungeon and completed Event Raids. Her outstanding talent, effort, and ample experience made this possible.

"But your attack is truthfully weak. Very weak. Although it's improved a lot, even if you train for another year, you probably can't deal an effective blow against a world's enemy."

"That's because I'm lacking..."

"No, the only thing you're lacking is time. Time is one thing no

one can change. Sorry, I didn't think we would be in such a rush either. If you had just two more years, you would have become more powerful than anyone else."

Her talent, effort, and God's true name proved this. Athena was Olympus' greatest warrior. Not even Zeus could take away this title.

"Then am I supposed to just stand back no matter what happens?"

Sumire, who was excited just a moment ago, now wore a sad expression. Seeing her face, I didn't feel like continuing either.

Nowadays, such sense of helplessness was common against Revival's members. 'There isn't much we can do in crucial moments.' 'Guild master and a few others shoulder all the burden.' Such thoughts were the cause of this helplessness.

Of course, without them, we wouldn't have been able to clear all the Event Dungeons during the last crisis, but it was also true that only the guild members other than me, Hwaya, Ina, and Daisy were left out of fighting powerful enemies. This was because other than the four of us, it was hard for the others to deal effective blows, much less fatal blows.

As a result, many of Revival's members were feeling depressed about not being able to do anything. I should have made it clearer how thankful I was for them. It wasn't too late. Since they had supreme talents in their own fields, there had to be something only

they could do.

Sumire would be the beginning.

“Don’t make that face. Do you remember what I said? I said I’m offering a method.”

“Ah, r-right, you did.”

Sumire’s expression became slightly brighter. How much my words affected her showed how innocent she was.

“I’m saying it’s impossible if you continue with your current training method. That’s why we’ll use a slightly unconventional method.”

“Unconventional... method?”

“Yep. It’s honing your blade for a single thrust.”

“A single... thrust...”

Seeing Sumire murmur after me, I held my spear and took a stance. Obviously, it was the stance I took when I used Heroic Strike. Sumire also noticed it.

“Shin-nim, that’s...”

“Yep.”

Sumire had the greatest defense, Athena’s shield, Aegis.

Once activated, Aegis automatically blocked the enemy’s attack without having to be held and even petrified the enemy. Sumire usually held the spear in one hand, but during this time, she could use both hands to hold the spear. The enemy will also be blocked by Aegis, and she’ll be thoroughly protected. Perfectly blocking the enemy’s attacks while attacking with her spear. It was any spearman’s dream.

Even so, just learning one technique didn’t advance one’s spearmanship. It only advanced his technique. Plus, even if he strengthened his technique, without proper spearmanship as the basis, it could never reach its maximum potential. That was why I never taught Sumire techniques.

Now, it was different. Sumire advanced extremely quickly. She not only had the talent to learn Heroic Strike, her level of spearmanship was more than enough to draw out its power. If she added Athena’s power on top of it? I was already looking forward to it.

“I’m a bit embarrassed, but it’s the greatest technique I can use with pure spearmanship.”

“It’s an honor!”

Sumire cheered up completely when I told her I would impart Heroic Strike onto her. Well, since she couldn't use Heroic Aura, it wouldn't be Heroic Strike, but...

“Right, let's call it the Goddess' Strike.”

“I, I haven't even learned it yet! And such an embarrassing name...”

“I'm sure it's better than Heroic Strike.”

My eyes were completely serious. I still didn't understand why I gave this skill such a name. I regretted it immensely. I regretted it every time I used it. Still, I shouted its name loudly every time. I could still hear mother's complaints from when I kick my bedsheet because of it.

“First, I'll show you a Heroic Strike using only my energies.”

I summoned Ruyue and asked her to create an extremely hard ice boulder in the center of the training room. In an instant, freezing energy filled our surroundings, and a giant ice boulder reaching the training room's ceiling appeared.

[Even Shin won't be able to break it easily!]

“Thanks.”

I then summoned Peika and had her enter my spear. I then quickly took my stance. I pulled back with my right hand, and my left hand supported the spear from underneath. I leaned my entire body back slightly and bent my knees adequately. I was used to focusing my energy in one place, so I didn't really need to do all this, but since Sumire was learning it from scratch, it was good to learn the proper stance.

“You have to feel the energy in your body. See how I concentrate it and shoot it out.”

“Yes.”

First, I roused Heroic Aura. It was an energy at the summit of all auras that empowered allies and erased evil. It could also strengthen all auras I possessed. It was truly a power befitting a Hero.

Next, I gave Peika my mana and also took out the Lightning God's power. Though it was granted by the dungeon, this power proved that I was chosen by lightning and thunder and that I had the qualification to rule over them. It wasn't much different from a god's true name. What this meant was that I would still maintain this power even if I lost my qualification as an explorer.

I could feel all of these powers concentrating on a single point on Chaotic Spear. My body's muscles, mana, aura, and elemental power. Everything came together. Peruta Circuit spun fiercely, while Mad Typhoon mixed the energies accordingly and create a

tiny whirlpool at my spear tip.

Sumire, who was watching me from a distance away, was completely focused. She didn't even breathe. Suddenly, I felt a bit uneasy.

“Ruyue, materialize and strengthen that a bit more.”

[Un!]

Concentrating Heroic Strike's destructive power onto one target was also one of the conditions of learning it. Not uselessly dispersing its destructive power and focusing it entirely on the target! My ancestor was undoubtedly a pervert.

I could also add Trishula, Sacrifice, Frozen Roar, Sky God's Rage, Twin-headed Ogre's Tattoo's close-range attack amplification, Succubus Queen's Tattoo's 2x mana... but I held myself back. It was already powerful enough.

“Huu... Haap!”

When I felt that I squeezed out every ounce of power, I attacked. Although I stabbed slowly so Sumire could clearly see it, my spear still traveled extremely quickly. As if it was being sucked in by the ice, it drove into the center of the ice. At that moment...

“Kyak!”

“I knew this would happen!”

The moment the spear tip struck the ice, its boundless energy devoured the ice, breaking it into thousands of pieces and scattering it. Sumire screamed and held up her shield, but the ice shards disappeared without hurting anyone. The ice was under Ruyue’s control.

Realizing that she was unhurt, Sumire stayed stiffened for a while with her shield held up, then lowered it with slightly trembling hands. Her voice also shook her hands.

“It’s too powerful. But Shin-nim, this isn’t your full power, right?”

“Mm, it gets stronger if I add gods’ true names, item effects, and skill effects. But...”

Other than gods’ true names, an ability like Lespina’s nullified them, so there wasn’t that big of a difference realistically. Sumire murmured with a dumbfounded expression.

“Too, too powerful. So this is Shin-nim’s power... As expected of Takemikazuchi...”

“Please.”

It seemed what I just showed Sumire went beyond what she could accept. I let out a dry cough and brought her back to reality.

“This is my technique. The technique you’ll make is different. There will be no lightning, no elemental power, and no Heroic Aura. Still, Sumire will have Sumire’s mana and Athena’s power.”

“Even if I learn it, will I be able to display the same destructive power?”

“Probably.”

‘With your crazy talent, it might be possible.’

“What I’m about to show you now... is what Heroic Strike was based on.”

I asked Ruyue to create another ice boulder. She used the same amount of mana, and its hardness was the same.

“This technique was something my ancestors created when they didn’t know mana. It was created purely to display power surpassing the limits of one’s physical body...”

As I explained, something caught my attention. Why did I just think about my sparring with Peruta? It felt like something was about to pop out of my head. I thought back to what I said to see if anything popped up, but nothing happened.

“Shin-nim? Are you okay?”

“Ah, yeah... I’m fine.”

I couldn’t understand. Still, I felt sure I would understand it one day. Soon, that is. Believing this, I set aside my idle thoughts and took up the same stance as before.

“I can’t say I mastered this technique my ancestors created, but I rate it highly since even without mana, it’s on par with an attack using mana. Sumire, you’ll have to use this skill as the basis to perfect your own technique.”

“Uuu, I have to learn something even Shin-nim didn’t master?”

“You can do it. Trust me. Unlike Heroic Strike, you’ll get a feeling for it when you see me use it.”

I held up my Chaotic Spear again. I let go of all my mana. I didn’t draw Lightning God’s power either. Using the pure power of my muscles, blood, and bones, I frantically drew everything under my control and outside of my control onto a single point. After concentrating and concentrating and concentrating... I eventually couldn’t see what was in front of me.

I could see one thing. The tip of my spear and the single point it needed to pierce through. I wanted to tell Sumire to concentrate, but I couldn’t say a thing because I was controlling my body. In

terms of difficulty, the last technique, in which I drew out all my power, was greater. Now, however, the process of controlling everything about my body and concentrating its power on a single point felt extremely difficult.

Then, I realized. Mana's support. Mana, which followed my will, helped me control my body much easier. I was used to receiving mana's support in using this technique. Now that I was relying purely on my power as a human being, controlling this power felt this difficult.

My heart thumped. If I realized this any later, my spearmanship might have even regressed. Although mana was powerful, I couldn't allow it to take over what a human's power could do. Mana had its own role. There was a domain that mana should never invade.

That was the concentration and flow of power. It was good that I realized it now before it was too late to turn back. It was good that I could still improve in my own area, rather than Peruta's. Just mastering high-rank Spear Technique wasn't the end. Just learning Mad Typhoon didn't mean that it was the only path I could walk.

“Shin-nim, you said you wouldn't use mana...”

I could feel a weak whirlpool rising. I didn't stop it. Because I was completely immersed in concentrating my body's power onto my spear tip, Peruta Circuit, which had become one with my body, was naturally reacting.

I was ready. With that thought, I reached forward. The spear smoothly drove into the ice. At that moment, I muttered to myself. I'd done it.

The giant ice boulder, which took up a large area, disappeared like it never existed. Although I didn't use any mana, what I accomplished was even more absurd than what I accomplished before. After pouring out my body's entire energy, I staggered slightly. As if it was waiting, Peruta Circuit swirled and consoled my exhausted body. Sumire finally exhaled the breath she was holding in.

“Amazing...!”

“Did you see that?”

“Yes, I did! I did, Shin-nim! Everything! I'll definitely learn it, definitely! With this, I should be able to fulfill my role!”

“I've been saying that.”

Although there was a side-effect of Sumire's worshiping me even more, Sumire had regained her enthusiasm. I could practically see the fire burning in her eyes. Not even I thought it would work so well.

On the other hand, there was something else in my mind. The power I just showed. If I could combine it with mana and my other

abilities...!

At that moment, when us master and disciple were burning with zealousness, a voice tickled my ears.

[Did you finish what you needed to do on Earth, Revival's master?]

I tried to remember who the voice belonged to and finally remembered. She was the administrative guild master Lost Valley's master, Eleine. She continued without hesitation.

[You should have time for us now, right? There's a request.]

[Request?]

[Yes, request.]

I felt like I could see her grinning.

[A Dimensional Mercenary request in the Edias continent, happening under the supervision of the dungeon.]

Chapter 267. Kahar (1)

I couldn't reject the request. Since I gave up on grinding stats, Dimensional Mercenary requests didn't really matter, but to me, Dimensional Mercenary requests were more than a way of obtaining stats and skill points. It was a way of getting one step closer to my final goal.

In Revival, there were two other Dimensional Mercenaries, Hwaya and Daisy. It hasn't been six months since Daisy last used her Dimensional Travel, so it was still on cooldown. Hwaya was currently dealing with Ciara who was practically a bomb on a short fuse. Hwaya had to stay with Ciara for at least the next few days.

But my Dimensional Travel skill let me bring other people, so I could easily bring Daisy along. If I wanted, I could bring other volunteers from the guild too.

"I'll have to hear them out first."

Ellos had asked me to come to Edias continent when I had time. He said he was preparing for the final battle. Although his world faced numerous hardships, it seemed it was heading for salvation.

However, the fact that this request came from an administrative guild rather than Ellos made me feel uneasy. I messaged back, trying to hide this feeling.

[Where should I go?]

[Come to Fairy Garden. You're more familiar with that place, right? I'll go first and deal with Loretta. It doesn't really matter whether I'm hit now or later.]

[Thank you.]

Last time, when Eleine requested me to go on a Dimensional Mercenary mission, Loretta hit her. Because I always met or fought a world's enemy in my Dimensional Mercenary missions, Loretta was extremely worried about me going. It was understandable. I would have felt the same way. No matter how dangerous Dimensional Mercenary missions were, they shouldn't be to that degree.

“Shin-nim, what's wrong?”

“Ah, I got a message about something. Sorry, Sumire. Can you train by yourself for a bit? I have to go do something.”

“Yes, I'll do my best! Good luck, Shin-nim!”

“Yeah, thanks.”

I smiled sweetly and felt better after seeing Sumire clench her fists. Right, I shouldn't be so scared before I heard their words. After leaving Sumire, I immediately went to Fairy Garden. When I neared the pavilion, I saw Eleine getting mercilessly beaten up by Loretta while other Fairy Garden members watched from the side.

“I’m going to die! I’m really going to die!”

“It’s okay, I’ll bring you back to life just to beat you up again!”

“Ow! Don’t just watch, save... Aak!”

“Wow.”

When I made a impressed interjection, some of the members noticed me and greeted me. I also waved my hand. I came to Fairy Garden so often that I was being treated like its member.

“How long has she been getting hit?”

“Since the moment she came to Fairy Garden.”

Was he working inside the guild today? The hobgoblin Meladel replied with a cup of green tea in his hands.

“I think she got hit about 1.2 million times.”

“I should praise Loretta for hitting her over a million times in just a short time.”

Loretta was so focused on hitting Eleine that she didn’t realize I’d come. Even I couldn’t follow her arms and legs easily. Still, I

improved a lot. I wouldn't have been able to see anything in the past.

“I. Told. You. Not. To. Involve. Shin. Nim. Didn't. I?”

“We don't have enough, ow! People, ow! S-Stop hitting me! You're going to ruin my skin! Ow!”

“There. Are. Other. Explorers!”

How were Loretta's slender arms and legs so powerful? I was extremely curious. Next to me, the elf Sikatra murmured as she nodded.

“As expected of the Queen. Using her power of blessing, she's making her muscles sustain no fatigue. Being able to use the power of magic for such a violent physical attack shows how much of a genius she is.”

“That's a very scary genius.”

If I saw this side of her earlier, I might not have fallen in love with her.

“Ow! It hurts!”

“I can make it so it doesn't hurt.”

“J-Just hit me!”

I didn’t want to see a corpse, so I stepped in.

“Loretta, that’s enough.”

“Shin-nim!?”

“Kahuk!”

Loretta stood tall the moment she heard my voice and kicked Eleine. With a short memorable cry, Eleine flew far, far away like a character from a manhwa. After Eleine left everyone’s view, Loretta finally turned around. It seemed she was giving her best in beating Eleine up, as she had tiny droplets of sweat on her forehead.

“Y-You came, Shin-nim? What business do you have? Did you come to play with me? Uhu, Uhuhu.”

“I’ve been watching for a while, so don’t pretend nothing happened.”

“No way.”

Loretta despaired. Meanwhile, the Fairy Garden’s members at the pavilion were betting on whether I’d lose interest in Loretta with what happened. These cruel people...

“Call Eleine here. I have to hear what she has to say.”

“No, Shin-nim. It’s too dangerous.”

“I have a friend in Edias continent. Plus...”

I swallowed my words. It wasn’t something I could say to someone else. Loretta tilted her head, but I just asked her to call Eleine back or bring her back to life. The dejected Loretta then clapped twice. Eleine appeared with her butt pointed up.

“Loretta, you bitch...!”

“Get up before I hit you again.”

“Your big chested violent elf! Hardcore stalker! Muscle fetishist... Kak!”

“Get up before you die.”

After that, Eleine needed some time before she could talk to me.

“Then I’ll keep it simple.”

With both her eyes bruised, Eleine began.

“I was in charge of Edias continent’s Hero, just like how Loretta is in charge of Earth’s Hero now.”

“I see.”

That was why she was so interested in Edias continent’s affairs. When I nodded, Eleine also nodded and opened her scabbed lips.

“To be frank, you and I are pretty much on the same level. Just what did you eat to get so strong at such a young age?”

“I trained a lot, but I was also lucky, very lucky. Anyways, you sure got a beating, Eleine.”

“Shut it!”

She used healing magic on herself again and gave Loretta a deathly glare. When Loretta smiled back at her, Eleine trembled and looked away. It seemed that an instinctive fear was instilled into her. Even so, I didn’t feel particularly sorry for her.

“Edias continent’s allied force went head to head with the continent’s invaders. The Hero was wise and courageous, and he acted as the allied force’s vanguard. After fighting rough battles over and over again, the time for him to fight the world’s enemy was coming close.”

“You’ve been talking in past tense.”

“Right.”

Eleine became quieter ever so slightly.

“I can’t contact him right now. He’s not dead... but I just can’t contact him. I think he’s gone missing.”

“I told you, ask other explorers to take care of it.”

Loretta spoke up coldly.

“You want to involve another Hero after a Hero’s gone missing? Are you insane? What are you going to do if s-something b-bad happens to Shin-nim!?”

“He can run if it’s dangerous!”

“You can’t run from the world’s enemy!”

Eleine then bit her lips. Loretta continued.

“It seems you already involved several other explorers. I know you’ve been taking care of him since the beginning and that you favor him a lot. Even so, risking the safety of another world is foolish. I’m sorry, but Shin-nim’s Earth is more important to me than the Edias continent, just like how Edias continent is more important to you than Earth.”

“But this guy’s mission completion rate is 100%!”

Eleine suddenly shouted.

“He already defeated two worlds’ enemies too! Can’t I be hopeful? He might find the missing Hero, and together, they might even...”

“You... Do you really want to die?”

“Loretta, stop. You’re being scary.”

I stopped Loretta. While Loretta soothed her momentary killing intent, I answered Eleine.

“I’ll accept this request.”

“Really!?”

“Shin-nim!”

“I have a friend in Edias continent. There’s something I’m looking for too. I want to go.”

“Shin-nim, you know what it means for a Hero to go missing, right?”

“Of course.”

I breathed in a long breath, and exhaled.

“It means there’s someone stronger than a Hero.”

“You’re still going to go?”

“Loretta, what I’m looking for is there.”

“Something Shin-nim is looking for...?”

Loretta widened her eyes. For a moment, her cuteness made me speechless. I stroked Loretta’s head and held myself in.

“What I said before... Someone stronger than a Hero.”

“Shin-nim...!”

Loretta jumped. However, I continued with a sinister smile.

“That’s exactly what I need right now. The dungeon is nice, but I need to fight a powerful enemy with my life on the line. I feel like that’s the only way I can achieve what I’m looking for. Something that can’t be expressed with levels.”

“Shin-nim, there’s no need to dive into danger!”

“I never dove into danger, Loretta.”

I rebutted.

“I didn’t need to. Danger came to me instead. Even now, Earth is facing a catastrophic danger. Next time Event Dungeons appear in mass, there will be more of them in higher danger. Loretta, does Earth’s current situation look like any other world’s?”

“I-It might be a bit different.”

“It’s not just a bit. Their speed of invasion and the powerful enemy above them, they’re both far greater than what any other world has to deal with. There’s no way I can be like any other Hero.”

I had to advance my league.

For the current me, fighting a world’s enemy might be dangerous, but it was also a chance. Through Dimensional Mercenary missions, I had improved both physically and mentally. I didn’t think it would be any different this time. Perhaps, this could be a chance for me to complete the technique I felt. That technique that wasn’t Heroic Strike nor the family’s secret technique...

It would be dangerous, extremely dangerous... but I still needed

to go to Edias continent. That's what my instincts were telling me.

"I can't just keep climbing the dungeon. I need to do everything I can. You can laugh if you think it's foolish, but still encourage me. I want Loretta to cheer me on."

"Shin-nim, you..."

Loretta stopped breathing.

"Shin-nim, did you already..."

"Thanks! You're really a good guy!"

Eleine interrupted Loretta and grabbed my hands.

"Lin was the only one for me, but if it's you, I wouldn't mind a one night stan— ugyagyagya!"

"If that's what Shin-nim decided, I won't stop you... But I'm still worried about sending you off like this. Go find Lin. He should be mostly finished."

Loretta stepped on Eleine, who twitched like a worm. After stomping on her twice, she stood on her and looked at me with serious eyes. What a mess. But since her advice was appropriate, I nodded and went to find Lin.

It seemed Loretta notified Lin already, as he was waiting for me. There were two bracelets on his hand. One was thin and small, while the other was thick and fairly big. The former seemed to be for women, while the latter seemed to be for men.

“Good timing, I just finished them today. I’ve been working for two whole months, damn it.”

Lin cursed the moment he saw me. Then, he threw the thick bracelet at me. Because of its dull silver color, I felt suspicious of its effects. I looked at Lin, asking if it was properly made. Lin smirked and spoke.

“Check it out yourself.”

“Okay... Let’s see.”

I opened the item information window. Then, I immediately widened my eyes.

[???(??.?)

??? – ???

??? – ???

??? ???]

Bugged! This is bugged!

Chapter 268. Kahar (2)

Chapter 268. Kahar (2)

“Lin?”

“I know what you want to say, but that’s a misunderstanding.”

Lin threw the remaining bracelet at me and took out a cigarette. Even though he didn’t do anything, his cigarette lit up. Without being surprised, I received Daisy’s bracelet and also appraised it. Just like mine, it was full of question marks.

“Those are masterpieces I created with all my strength. There won’t be anything like them ever again.”

Lin puffed a smoke as he stared at me. I shrugged.

“I know. After all, Lin’s been working on them for two months. But why can’t I see their information?”

“Isn’t it obvious? It’s because the Lord can’t see through them.”

It felt like someone smacked me on the head. Lin was smirking.

“The Dungeon Lord isn’t omnipotent or omniscient. She can measure rewards she gives out, but these are equipment I made with my own power. If the Lord could read them so easily, my

pride would be hurt.”

“So you didn’t give your all for the equipment you made for me so far?”

“Come on... I just didn’t have enough time. I could only do it this time because I was stuck here for my punishment. Also...”

He continued after a bit of hesitation.

“Items don’t become unknown just by having good effects. Those bracelets might surpass the Legend grade, but if you ask whether they’re on the level of Divine grade... Then I can only shake my head.”

“So like Enigma, yet not absolute.”

“Exactly.”

I grinned. It seemed these items were similar to Enigma, the mana I could wield when I used Overlord. Objects that surpassed the dungeon’s influence. They were objects created to resist the worlds’ enemies.

“So? What do they do?”

“I don’t know exactly.”

“This Draconian...”

“Hey, quantifying and qualifying an object’s ability isn’t easy! How am I supposed to see through something that even the Lord can’t? Huu...”

Lin dodged my gaze and puffed another smoke. I would have pulled his hair out if I could. Did Lin feel my bloodlust? Or did he feel sorry to not say anything? Regardless, he let out a dry cough and gave an explanation.

“At the very least, they aren’t cursed. Yours even has dragon’s blessing. The experience I gained from fighting the Book Walkers was used to make it. If you fight them again, as long as that bracelet is protecting you, they won’t be able to write about you. Not even a world’s enemy can nullify that bracelet, so it’ll work against anyone.”

“Anyone?”

“Anyone.”

I decided to trust Lin’s words. After all, Lin, the great blacksmith, took two months to work on them.

I put the bracelet on my left wrist as Pure Black Desire was already on my right wrist. Immediately after I put it on, I felt my senses change.

How do I explain this? It was almost like my senses got sharper. Right, it was as my sensory organs doubled. Eyes, nose, mouth, ears. The four organs perceiving outside information all became heightened. To be honest, I experienced this feeling whenever my levels and stats rose, but it was just too extreme this time. For a moment, I felt so dizzy that I had to stop to catch my breath.

“Oh, looks like it’s working. I haven’t tried them because you can’t take them off once you wear them.”

“It’s... like you said.”

I raised my left arm. The bracelet shrunk to fit my wrist and gripped my arm like it was a part of it. Although it shouldn’t be stuck, it really didn’t budge. After a while, I finally got used to the change, but a new twisting pain struck my insides.

“Lin...!?”

“I imitated the way Lord raised your league. Don’t glare at me like that. I didn’t know how to do it, so I had to use a little bit of draconic power. A lot, actually... I scraped a dragon’s body clean, too.”

Lin flicked his cigarette and fell in thought. Then, he snapped his fingers.

“It’s elevating your body to be similar to a dragon’s. If your achievements and league aren’t enough, you’ll die from having

your body twisted, but you have more than enough qualification.”

“So this isn’t giving me another ability, but rather...”

“Right! Excluding everything you got from the dungeon, purely based on the achievements you’ve made, it’s using draconic power to adjust your ability to fit the true league you should have. That’s why it’s lacking compared to levels or stats. Mm, now that I think about it, it’s completely different from the method Lord uses. After all, Lord directly bestowed you with league. She’s really something else.”

“This...! Did you know about this, Lin?”

“Of course I did. That’s why I made you an equipment like this.”

At that moment, I finally overcame the extreme pain and stood up. Just like how my external organs were improved, I could feel that my internal organs improved. The flow of blood sped up, my bones got tougher, and my heart and other organs became reinforced.

When I clenched my fists, Lin added a small remark.

“No one will be able to take that away from you. It won’t be as useful as the boundless stats you possess, but it’ll still be useful. After all, it’s purely your power now.”

“Lin!”

I shouted.

“There’s no way you can make something like this with just a dragon’s body. You threw away your own power, didn’t you!?”

“Not too much. The one for that girl only has a fraction of what I put in yours.”

“But why would you go so far?”

“Because it’s the first time I’ve seen someone with the talent to accept a dragon’s power. I was curious.”

“Don’t joke.”

“Because I wanted to give them a good punch.”

Lin spoke quietly. I shut my mouth and stared at him. Now that my body was reforged with draconic power, I could finally see that he had gotten weaker than before. If I used Overlord, I was certain my attacks would reach him. Not too much? How was this ‘not too much’?

Lin raised his slender arms that looked incapable of even lifting up his guns. Feeling like his arms were chained up, my breathing stopped for a moment. I didn’t know if Lin knew how I felt, but he spoke with a rigid voice.

“You do it in my place. Give them a good punch.”

“Lin...”

“I felt something from the Sipua incident. Countless bastards are countlessly screwing with countless worlds, and I’ll continue to get tangled with them. How would you feel if you were me?”

“Like a piece of shit, I guess?”

“Exactly. Who wants to live a piece of shit life? Unfortunately, I can’t leave this place. The only choice I have is to leave everything to someone I can trust.”

I didn’t know how to respond. Should I thank him for trusting in me? Lin grinned at my speechless self and added.

“You got it now? Before you kill them, shout, ‘This is for Lin!’ I’ll ask that grey haired girl if you did or not.”

“Hu, got it. Leave it to me.”

Since I already received it, there was no way to give it back. I answered with a smile and put away Daisy’s bracelet into safety. I wanted to ask her to come with me, so I could give it to her then.

“Now leave.”

“Ah, Lin, one of my friends is an ability user that uses guns.”

“Eh? Like me?”

“Yes.”

Lin took out another cigarette and bit down on it. As he asked with a uncertain voice, I immediately nodded. Then, he smirked.

“Interesting. Bring him to me later. I’ll check him out myself. Be thankful.”

“I thought you’d say that. It won’t take too long.”

For someone who always complained, he never let me down. Tsundere, how cute! I waved my hand in thanks and turned around. Leon, you better thank me!

“Daisy, where are you?”

[Beyond’s 16th floor. Just came in, today.]

I cursed inwardly. Although Daisy was an excellent warrior, she still couldn’t conquer a Beyond floor in a day or two. I couldn’t receive her help this time.

When I didn't say anything, Daisy asked.

[Do you need my help?]

“No, it's okay.”

[I'll, die now. So, wait.]

“It's fine, really! Don't die on purpose, please.”

[... Tsundere?]

For a moment, she made me lost for words, but I quickly regained my composure and retorted.

“No. Who even taught you that word?”

[But Kang Shin needs, my help.]

“I don't... Well, I do, but I'll be fine by myself.”

[I knew it. Tsundere.]

“I'm really not.”

[Wait 10 minutes.]

“Don’t. Not being able to enter the dungeon for a month is too damaging right now.”

[... Tsk.]

Daisy seemed to understand. Even as she clicked her tongue unhappily, she stopped saying she’d purposely die.

“I’m going on a Dimensional Mercenary mission. Lin gave me the reward he made for you, so I’ll give it to you when I get back.”

[Un.]

She answered quietly, then asked a question.

[Where are you going?]

“You won’t follow me, right?”

[I’ll rush Beyond and go.]

“I’ll just accept your thoughts.”

[Tsk.]

After talking with her, I opened the guild communication channel and told them I'd come back after a Dimensional Mercenary mission. Hwaya was upset, but she knew she had to stay by Ciara's side right now.

Since I was done with all the business I had to take care of, it was now time to go find Eleine again. Before that, however, I contacted Ellos. Since the Hero of his world went missing, I wanted to check up on his safety. Thankfully, he replied as soon as he received my message.

[Shin!]

“Hey, Ellos, it's great that you picked up.”

[If you contacted me, does that mean...?]

“Earth is pretty calm right now.”

Ellos breathed a sigh of relief. His voice was extremely heavy.

[Huu... I've been waiting for you. Something troublesome happened to my continent, so I've been wanting to get your help.]

“Yeah, I heard from others too. I'll be there soon, so wait for me.”

With that, I headed back to the pavilion. Loretta was choke-

holding Eleine.

“Ugyagyagyagak!”

“You’re still at it!?”

“They’ve been at it since you left. Do you want some popcorn?”

Lotang, the Dwarf, shoved a bowl full of popcorn towards me. I grabbed a handful and shoved it in my mouth. Then, I plopped down next to him. The rest of Fairy Garden’s members were munching on popcorn and enjoying the scene. These guys were all evil.

After Eleine’s face mysteriously turned white, then red, then white, then red, Loretta seemed to have gotten tired of strangling her as she changed to a crossface hold. Eleine’s tone was about to break the Guinness world record. She was tapping on the ground furiously, but unfortunately, there didn’t seem to be a tap-out rule in Fairy Garden’s rulebook.

“Kkkuk, if, you’re, here, stop, her!”

“Oh, Shin-nim!”

Perhaps because she was seen last time, Loretta got up leisurely. Eleine fainted with bubbles foaming from her mouth, but no one paid her any attention.

“We were just discussing our friendship between women. I put in good words for Shin-nim, so she won’t try to flirt with you again!”

“Good words...?”

If what I saw were ‘good words’, Loretta’s ‘lecturing’ just might kill. With that in my mind, I asked Loretta.

“Let’s not talk too much from now, Loretta.”

“O, Oh. Then... U, Uhehe.”

Loretta interpreted my words as she liked and fell into her own imaginary world. I guess that’s another talent of hers...

I waited for Eleine to recover. When she did, I received a piece of paper from her. Loretta was still in her imaginary world, smiling creepily.

“This is the request form? It’s the first time I’ve seen one in paper.”

“It’ll work as a road sign. A part of the Hero’s item is engraved in it, so it’ll tell you where the Hero is.”

“Aha.”

“This time, there’s a total of twenty five people including you. They should all be gathered where you’re heading. There’s just one goal, saving the Hero.”

Eleine spoke with dignity as she fixed her ruined dress. Of course, there was no dignity to be felt.

“It’ll be extremely dangerous. You might even encounter a world’s enemy. I’ll ask one more time. Will you really go?”

“Yes.”

“Thank you!”

She spread her arms out to hug me, then lowered them with a noticeably flinch.

“Good luck! I’ll pray for your victory!”

Just like that, I headed to the Edias continent with Licorice and Lotte. Ah, with Loretta’s blessing too, of course.

Chapter 269. Kahar (3)

Just like how it was when I went to Luka continent, I expected to find myself inside a palace when I used Dimensional Travel. I was right. After using Dimensional Travel, Lotte, Licorice, and I found ourselves in the middle of a vast hall filled with knights and magicians. When I looked around, I didn't see any other Dimensional Mercenaries. Just when I was thinking that they had already left, one of the knights murmuring amongst themselves approached me.

“You're a Dimensional Mercenary, right? Do you know how many more are coming?”

“I'm the last one.”

“Are you Kang Shin-nim?”

“... Yes.”

What's this? They know who I am? As if to prove my suspicion, the knight then bowed respectfully.

“Crown Prince is waiting for you. Follow me.”

“Crown Prince...?”

I widened my eyes. The Crown Prince is waiting for me, a

Dimensional Mercenary? Could it be...? I shut my mouth and followed the knight. I didn't need to think too much about it. After all, I would soon see it with my own eyes.

“Dear Husband, the people here are pretty strong.”

“They're doing well against their invaders, so it makes sense.”

“Their gazes are annoying. Hero, can I pull their eyes out?”

“It's because you two are pretty. Just ignore them.”

In this place full of men, Lotte and Licorice stood out too much. As we followed the knight, I could feel everyone's gazes locking onto us. In most cases, stares fixed on women shifted to the man they were traveling with. It was truly annoying. Even on a Dimensional Mercenary mission, I was receiving gazes full of envy. Just focus on your war, damn it!

“Please don't mind them. They're just mentally exhausted from repeated battles. When they see Kang Shin-nim traveling with two beautiful women, it's natural that they...”

“Lotte and Licorice are fighters too... Well, whatever.”

We arrived in front of the audience chamber. The knight stopped and announced our arrival. A voice of a young man then told us to enter. When the door opened, we walked in in a straight line. In the fairly large audience chamber, there was one man sitting at the

head of a long table.

“Oh, you’re really here. It’s been a long time!”

“Yeah... Paul!?”

I almost fell over from the surprise. The man wearing a fancy armor and sitting at the head of the table was undoubtedly Ellos’ party member, Paul. Seeing me speechless, Paul seemed a bit down.

“Don’t be so openly shocked. Did you expect Ellos to be here?”

“Well, yeah.”

Paul smiled bitterly at my honest reply.

“To be honest, I also think that he’s more fitting for this position. But even if he’s the party leader in the dungeon, in the Edias continent’s Cravis Empire, he is my royal guard as Count Kasina’s eldest son.”

“And you’re a crown prince? Ah, I remember now, your last name was Cravis.”

“That’s right. First, come on in. Ellos will be here soon.”

Like he said, Ellos did arrive soon. He was fully armored and wore a stiff expression. When he saw me, his expression lightened slightly.

“Friend, you really came!”

“Sorry that I came so late, Ellos. It looks like the other mercenaries already left.”

“Right. They already separated into their own teams. But to be honest, a part of them are dummies. Because the invaders are also looking for the Hero, we have to move secretly and cautiously.”

Looking at Ellos’ serious expression and Paul’s lax expression, I couldn’t help but compare the two. I wanted to ask if they were pulling a prank on me by pretending to play the other’s role, but I also remembered Ren being a crown prince. If Ren was a crown prince, I had to acknowledge Paul as one too.

“By the way, who are they?”

“Ah, this is Licorice and this is Lotte. Licorice is a Succubus Queen and Lotte is a Blaze Queen, a stronger variety of wyverns. They’re... my allies.”

“Hi, I heard you’re Dear Husband’s friend. Nice to meet you.”

“Hmph.”

As expected of a succubus, Licorice greeted them with a charming smile. Lotte, on the other hand, looked uncomfortable. While I was looking at them and making a wry smile, Paul and Ellos whispered to each other with stiff expressions.

“Succubus Queen? Wyvern? They’re both look like beautiful women... Amazing.”

“The far-reaching rumors of Revival’s guild master doesn’t even come close to the truth...”

I wondered what rumors about me were spreading, but now wasn’t the time to ask. After whispering with Ellos, Paul looked at me with a more spirited face.

“Let me explain to you the details.”

“Good.”

“Then... Ellos.”

“Un.”

Ellos is explaining!?

“I explained how we had a huge battle, right? Our continent’s Hero is a great warrior who’s broken through to the First

Dungeon's 92nd floor. In that great battle, he cut down countless invaders and brought victory to our continent's allied force. The leader of the invaders is a man called 'Kain'. At the time of the battle, his strength was similar to the Hero's. On top of the countless corpses of invaders and of our continent's inhabitants, they fought fiercely. In the end, neither side came out victorious, and the invader's retreated. Paul, do you have a map?"

"On the wall, here."

Ellos congealed mana on his finger and touched a point on the map. A small mark was left by a burn.

"From here to here is the invaders' territory. Here's our empire. Here and here are independent nations that are allied with us. They ally with us whenever a huge battle is imminent. Although several countries have already fallen, most of the survivors came together and formed an army. Now, they're a part of us. We've been even in size of forces. For the final battle, we planned on using a Dimensional Mercenary request to bring many Dimensional Mercenaries. Until that happened."

"The Hero going missing?"

"Right."

Ellos nodded and bit his lips. His eyes seemed to be burning.

"Ellos became the Hero's disciple a little while ago."

“Ah.”

I remembered Ellos telling me about catching the Hero's attention. Still, I didn't think that he'd become his disciple. I checked out Ellos once more. Indeed, I couldn't tell what league he was in, but he had a formidable spirit. Plus, it was hard to feel his presence. If that's what I felt, Ellos must have grown immensely.

The dungeon wasn't the only place to grow stronger. It was like that for me, too.

“If we can't rescue the Hero, there's no future for Edias. I want to believe he hasn't been captured by the invaders, but...”

“If he was captured, he would have been killed on the spot. Don't worry, Ellos, he should be fine.”

Ellos made a strange smile at my encouraging words. It was the type of smile that tried to mask sadness. Ellos then nodded and drew mana on his hand once more.

“We have a few places in mind.”

He drew points on the map one by one. They were all in the invaders' territory.

“After the great battle, when we were retreating, we learned that

the Hero had gone missing.”

“In the middle, huh.”

“One thing we know for sure is that the Hero fought them. Our enemies operate with groups of skilled assassins. I don’t know how they lured the Hero from the barracks, but it’s likely that...”

“A hostage?”

“It’s possible.”

Paul’s expression was completely stiff. It didn’t fit his character at all.

“The Hero used to be a wandering knight. He came to our empire when he became a Hero, so we don’t really know his history. He always said he was an orphan, but that might have been false. Maybe, the invaders took his relative hostage and lured him out.”

“Regardless of how, after luring him out, they must have ambushed him, and although they failed, they most likely injured the Hero greatly.”

“To the point, he couldn’t return to the barracks?”

Ellos nodded silently. Paul then continued.

“Many people speculated where the Hero could be hiding. The easiest place to hide is...”

“The Dungeon.”

“But in their territory, you can’t enter the dungeon nor use its messaging system.”

“What!?”

My eyes shot open. Their territory? In this area covering half the map, you couldn’t enter the dungeon or message anyone? For a moment, I thought of Lespina. However, there was a clear difference in their range.

Why were these things happening so often nowadays? I doubt all worlds’ enemies use this method.

As a confirmation, I asked.

“Are the explorers’ power suppressed in their territory?”

“How did you know? It’s not by a lot, but everyone has their power suppressed by about 10%.”

10%. Thankfully, it wasn’t a large amount. Still, the range of their suppression was shocking. When I closed my mouth, Ellos continued his explanation.

“They’re proficient in the science of magic. They must have analyzed something about explorers through countless battles. Or maybe, they captured explorers to experiment on them. In the last battle, we found out about their ability. It’ll be dangerous if we let them be. If they reduce explorers’ power by another 10%, their chance of victory will skyrocket.”

“That aside, the reason the Hero can’t go to the dungeon is that he’s stuck in their territory?”

“Yeah. So he must have found a place to hide. After careful consideration...”

He pointed a few spots on the map. Although the circles he drew were small compared to the map, since the map was of the entire continent, the region encompassed by the circles must be fairly big.

“A mountain range and a forest, both with complex topographies. They’re the easiest places to hide. There are also wastelands and rocky mountains, but they’re unlikely. When we realized the Hero went missing, we immediately sent our troops out to search for him. As you can guess, we couldn’t find him. We couldn’t stay in the enemy’s territory for long, so the search didn’t last long. If we stayed too long, we might have been annihilated before we could find the Hero. In the end, we split off a part of the army to search for the Hero, and the rest retreated.”

“And you still couldn’t find him.”

“Yeah.”

Paul added.

“And the ones that remained were all killed. The invaders also sent out troops to find the Hero before us.”

“It’s just one thing after another, huh.”

“If they capture the Hero, it’s all over.”

Ellos spoke with a stiff voice.

“That’s why we had to rely on Dimensional Mercenaries. With each of them being so powerful, they’re highly mobile, and they have the strength to resist the invaders if they encountered them.”

“Makes sense.”

As Dimensional Mercenaries, they were most likely used to missions like this. It was the same for me. As long as I didn’t meet the world’s enemy, I had the confidence to come out unscathed no matter how many enemies I faced.

“We managed to contact an administrative guild, and we even received a magical tool to help locate the Hero. That’s the paper you have, Shin.”

“I heard. This paper apparently tells me where the Hero is?”

“The problem is that the Hero’s signal is coming from multiple places.”

... I thought of a certain ninja’s Shadow Clone Technique, but I stayed quiet. If I said anything, it would end with me being hit.

“We think it has to do with the explorers’ power being suppressed in their territory. After all, the administrative guild is part of the dungeon. Still, we couldn’t just disregard it. The only choice we had was searching all the areas pointed out by the magical tool.”

I asked.

“And what area am I in charge of?”

“Sorry, Shin. It’ll be slightly dangerous.”

“I didn’t think it wouldn’t be. Just tell me, where is it?”

Fighting the world’s enemy was also in my consideration. The words ‘slightly dangerous’ didn’t bother me at all. Did Ellos know about this? He nodded and pointed at the map. It was a large mountain big enough to appear on the continental map.

“Peruta Mountain Range. It’s the most dangerous mountain range in the continent and a place with the highest density of mana in the continent. That’s where we’re going.”

Chapter 270. Kahar (4)

Chapter 270. Kahar (4)

It seemed Cravis Empire's Crown Prince, Paul, couldn't go with us on our search.

"I want to go too. The Hero is the empire's hope... but I can't leave. My father collapsed recently, so I've been in his shoes."

"I can't imagine that at all."

"Kuku, I know. To be honest, I want to go to the dungeon and go wild like always."

Paul going wild? I only remembered monsters going wild on him... Of course, I didn't say anything. After all, this was Paul's home ground.

The Paul I knew from the dungeon was slightly different than the Paul I met in the audience chamber and the grand hall. Perhaps because I was more familiar with his dungeon self, it felt like a carefree, clumpy kid was forced to wear the clothes of a crown prince. He seemed too unfit for the position, but perhaps that's exactly what made him so passionate and foolish in the dungeon. He could be using the dungeon as a way of relieving his stress.

Of course, that was just my opinion. It could just be that he had no sense for battle.

I stared fixedly at the Peruta Mountain Range on the map.

“Peruta, huh.”

“Ah, right, didn’t you say you summoned Peruta? I remember you telling me that a few years ago.”

“Yeah, I met him a while ago too. I’m learning spearmanship from him once a month.”

Paul and Ellos both expressed surprise at my words.

“Really? You’re learning spearmanship from that Peruta? That’s amazing!”

“No, it’s probably not the same Peruta as the one from our continent’s myth. Peruta is the top-ranking god from the empire’s creation myth. As a principle deity, he’s on a completely different league than the other gods.”

‘If they knew I had true names of other principle deities, they might flip out. Well, Deific Manifestation is different from gods’ true names.’

In truth, using Deific Manifestation no longer gave me any advantage in battle. Although Peruta’s spearmanship and Peruta Circuit were more powerful than mine, I had other techniques that

he couldn't use – Overlord.

Peruta was unable to bring out the true depth of his martial arts with my body, while I could strengthen my entire self with Overlord. Simply put, I was superior. Even so, Peruta was a good master and an adviser.

While I was regretting never having asked Peruta about Edias continent, Ellos was coming to his own conclusions.

“It can't be the same Peruta. Spear-using heroes from our continent all called themselves Peruta, so the one Kang Shin summoned must be one of them.”

“Um, yeah.”

I didn't argue with Ellos. Still, I knew that the Peruta I knew was the one from the myth. It seemed this myth carried great weight in this continent. The mythical existence they worshipped so much was teaching me, who wasn't even from their continent? I could understand what they felt. That's why I stayed silent.

“Anyways, why is this place called Peruta Mountain Range?”

“It's simple. In the myths, that's where Peruta vanished.”

It really was simple as Ellos said. I felt my heart thump. Something was there. Something that would let me take a step forward. I was certain. If I knew that Edias continent had a vestige

of Peruta, I would have come earlier!

No, I wasn't late. Ellos said it was the most dangerous place on the continent. If I came before, I might have had to turn back without gaining anything. Now was the best time.

"Shin, we have to talk about who's coming."

"Oh, right. I guess it can't just be me and you. Since Paul can't go, besides you and me, I guess your fiancé..."

I looked at Ellos' left ring finger. Ellos quickly hid his hand, but I had already seen it.

"..."

He had two silver rings on his ring finger. One was big and thick, while the other was small. It felt like he squeezed his finger through.

I stopped breathing. I couldn't continue what I was saying, but I also knew I couldn't stay silent. Still, I couldn't think of any words to say. In the end, I only said one word.

"Sorry."

"No, it's fine."

Ellos responded promptly as if he knew what I was going to say. I didn't have the confidence to look at his face. I remembered him saying that he was always prepared for the death of his comrade. But if it was his fiancée?

Impossible.

“Shin, I'm okay. As a tribute to her, help me find the Hero.”

“Yeah, I promise. I'll save the Hero.”

“Yeah... Thanks.”

He smiled bitterly. I felt like I finally understood why he sounded so down when I last talked to him.

In the end, the party members were narrowed down to just me and Ellos. Rather than rescuing the Hero, fighting to protect the empire's citizens was the priority of the empire's knights. The ones that could participate in the rescue mission had already left with the other Dimensional Mercenaries.

“You might feel uneasy, but trust me. I'm level 60 now, so I won't pull you down.”

“I trust you.”

Ellos most likely spent more time in the battlefield than he did in

the dungeon. Considering this, his progress was outstanding. Even with the Hero's personal training, it wouldn't have been possible without his tenacity. I was genuinely surprised.

Of course, it was wrong to think I was the only one with talent. I was happy with his potential. The reason the Hero chose him as his disciple was likely also because he saw Ellos' potential.

“Come back safe and sound. Other knights will ready the things you need.”

Paul wished us luck. I still couldn't get used to him being a crown prince. There was something bothering me, but I forced myself to smile and left the audience chamber with Ellos. In the hallway, refreshing wind blew through the opened windows.

“Be thankful it's autumn, Shin. Fire elementals like to play around too much during summer, and fires randomly erupt from thin air.”

“I should've come during summer to scold those guys.”

It didn't really matter how the weather was as my body was no longer affected by it.

“Of course, monsters are threatening no matter what season it is. Before we enter the mountain range, we'll also encounter more invaders than you're thinking.”

We were entering the enemy's territory, and they were also madly searching for the Hero. Objectively speaking, this mission was ridiculously dangerous. We knew our destination, but that didn't mean we could just march there.

For that reason, we left through the first floor's entrance. Soldiers and maids were busily running about. The entirety of the palace, the empire, or even the continent could be running around like this, preparing for the decisive battle. Their determination and tension showed the gravity of the situation.

That is, until they saw me.

"... There's a woman like that in this world?"

"Whose woman is she?"

"Damn, her brilliance is making me blind!"

"If she gives me a glance, I can die without regrets while fighting the invaders."

"..."

"Shin, wait a moment. Hey, you, come over here."

Ellos called a few of them here and gave them an order I couldn't hear. Seeing the male knights and soldiers scurrying away, I could

tell he threatened them with punishment if they kept ogling Lotte and Licorice. As a man, I empathized. Even if the world was about to fall, guys couldn't help but look at pretty women in front of them.

Once the curious gazes disappeared, Ellos opened the map he was carrying. He then explained the route we'd take in detail.

"It'll be dangerous no matter which path we take, but this is the safest. We'll only have to go around a bit."

"Aren't we in their territory anyways?"

"With this path, we'll avoid two of their castles. You know what that means, right?"

I did. Unless the invaders were like monsters who liked to live in the wild, most would be living in castles. Ellos most likely planned a route that would have the least amount of fights. I again realized how absurd this mission was.

I reviewed my options. The straight path was shorter, but contained two castles on the way. Ellos' path was longer, but allowed us to avoid the castles. Since we didn't know what we would lose if we fought at the two castles, Ellos' path wasn't a bad choice at all.

"Ellos."

Still, I disagreed. It didn't matter whether I fought two battles or two thousand battles as long as the world's enemy wasn't there.

“What's wrong?”

Ellos tilted his head. I looked back at Lotte. She shook her head with teary eyes.

“No, I don't want to. Please, Hero is the only one allowed! Why can't you understand how I feel?”

“S-Sorry.”

She must have had a lot of stress built up without me knowing... I felt guilty all of a sudden. No, it wasn't just a feeling. I was guilty. Did she get smaller when she became a Blaze Queen just to prevent other people from riding her? In any case, it was hard for me to ask her to sacrifice herself. If I didn't have any other choice, I would have to ask her again, but for now...

I faced Ellos, who looked just as surprised as Lotte.

“Do you know any wyverns live nearby? It doesn't to have wyverns. I'm looking for rideable monsters that can fly quickly.”

“If you're okay with wild untamed wyverns, there are some in a canyon about six hours from here on horseback. But Shin, are you suggesting we tame wyverns to fly? First, taming wyverns is impossible. Second, we would be imposing ourselves completely by

flying so openly in the sky. Plus, we don't have any time to waste to go tame wyverns. That canyon is in the opposite direction of where we're going."

"Ellos, here's my thought."

I spoke resolutely.

"We'll fight less if we just kill the enemies that can follow our speed in the air. Our pace will shoot up, too."

"It's too bold. We'll just be shot down!"

"It's a small risk compared to the benefits. Didn't you say Peruta Mountain Range was dangerous? We'll have to fight monsters there, so we can't waste time walking there when we can fly."

"Flying will be quicker, but the risk is... Shin, just what level are you?"

"Levels aren't important to me anymore, friend."

With that, I grinned. The two bracelets on my wrist, Pure Black Desire and Lin's bracelet, each glowed with a hazy, bright light. Since I'd yet to name Lin's bracelet, I decided to call it Radiance from now.

Ellos looked at me with a dumbfounded look and surrendered.

“Fine. Since I’m risking my life already, I might as well jump into the dragon’s mouth. I just hope we can kill it before it breaths fire and kills us.”

“Good, it’s decided. So, where’s the canyon?”

“Northwest. It’s...”

Ellos raised his finger and pointed to a direction. Immediately, Lotte transformed into her Blaze Queen form and flapped her wings. Surprised, Ellos jumped back.

“She really is a wyvern!”

“She’s different from normal wyverns.”

[I’ll go alone. Forcing wyverns to submit is nothing for a Blaze Queen like myself.]

“How long will it take?”

Six hours on trained horses. Disregarding the time it takes to subdue wild wyverns, it was 12 hours. Lotte smiled confidently.

[Twenty minutes is enough.]

Lotte then shot up in an instant and disappeared at the speed of light. Ellos speechlessly followed the trace of light Lotte left behind.

“Just who is that wyvern...?”

“Like I said, she’s not a normal wyvern. Alright then, Ellos, while we wait...”

“Yeah?”

I put the map away and glared at him lightly. It was time to request what I’ve been waiting for.

“Treat me to some food, you bastard. It might be normal in your world to send people off without feeding your guests, but that’s unheard of in mine.”

You’re sending me off to a place where I can’t even open my inventory, and you’re not even treat me to a meal! Paul, you bastard, I won’t forget this!

Chapter 271. Kahar (5)

In under 20 minutes, Lotte really brought a giant wyvern. Ellos got frightened out of his mind when he saw the wyvern and refused to ride it, but as he said before, he was jumping into a dragon's mouth. How could he give up now?

Suppressed completely by Lotte's league, the wyvern obeyed her words absolutely. Even when Ellos got on, it was looking at Lotte. For the record, it seemed Lotte was okay with other women riding her as she let Licorice get on.

“Let's go then.”

“Friend, I'm beginning to regret this.”

“Don't worry, everyone says that at first.”

One large and one small, two wyverns flew up into the sky, drawing attention from many in the palace. I ignored their gazes and shouted.

“Let's go!”

[Grrrrruaaaa!]

Lotte flapped her wings with a spirited roar. Ellos seemed to have given up, as he also entrusted his body to his wyvern. In an

instant, we left the palace and was soaring through the sky. There was nothing that could block our path.

“At this speed, we’ll enter their territory in ten minutes!”

“Got it!”

“Dear Husband, here.”

Entering the invaders’ territory meant that the dungeon’s inventory and messaging system would become unusable. I already told the guild members that I wouldn’t be able to contact them, so all I had to do was take out the items I needed from the inventory.

Licorice, who was taking this opportunity to hug me tightly, peeked her head over my shoulder and gave me a silk pouch.

“What’s this?”

“It’s the inventory substitute Dear Husband talked about. I’m good at space magic, you know.”

“So this is...?”

“Yep. It should be able to hold about a thousand potions.”

“Great. Thanks, Licorice.”

A pouch this size was also easy to carry around. I happily took the pouch and began to move items from the inventory. At that moment, Licorice, who was watching me fixedly, asked.

“Dear Husband, will we be fine on our own?”

“Yep.”

“Really?”

“Yep.”

“... Okay, I trust Dear Husband.”

Licorice then went back to hugging my back. I was fairly used to it by now, but it was impossible to resist Licorice’s natural fragrance. My heart was beating faster.

“This is nice. I wish I can stay like this without having to do anything.”

“You’ll be able to, one day.”

I moved the remaining two Elixirs from my inventory and murmured.

“It won’t be long.”

Soon, I could feel that we had entered the invaders’ territory. My strength fell slightly, and I couldn’t open my inventory when I tried. Thanks to Lin’s bracelet, I didn’t feel too weak. It was really a supreme treasure. No, it was part of my body now.

“Shin, are you okay!?”

“I’m fine!”

Ellos shouted with his voice still shaking, and I replied nonchalantly. If Ellos was fine, everyone else would be fine too.

“We’ll pass over their castle soon!”

“Then we’ll have to prepare a gift.”

Along with my words, Licorice immediately began to chant. I also summoned two elementals and put them on standby. I looked down on the land from Lotte’s back. According to Ellos, the invaders were humans who called themselves invaders.

Because of their appearances which were identical to Edias continent’s inhabitants’, no one believed they were invaders when they first revealed themselves. Apparently, everyone thought they were from foreign lands. But when more and more invaders revealed themselves in battles against Edias continent’s people, and invaders who had infiltrated the continent made great

achievements politically, people finally caught on. When Edias continent's people found out, several countries had already had their societal values flipped by the invaders. Their methods were truly worthy of the name 'invader'.

The invaders were specialized in magic, and many apparently wielded powerful magical tools. This was also the reason we didn't fly too high. Each castle apparently had huge magical tools that shot down flying entities above a certain altitude. They were more or less identical to anti-aircraft missiles.

“They're coming!”

The first thing I sensed was cannons installed on the castle's walls. Even though no one was operating them, over two hundred cannons all turned towards us and shot magic bullets. They were weaker than anti-aircraft missiles, but they were more than enough to turn a city into a beehive.

[Eit!]

Before anyone else did anything, Ruyue made a cute shout and spread her arms out. A giant transparent ice barrier appeared under us and easily blocked all the magic bullets. The ice barrier then shattered and fell. No, Ruyue had done it on purpose.

[Crush them!]

Ruyue's voice strengthened the falling ice shards, and they

ravaged the castle walls like a storm. The ice storm continued until about half of the cannons were broken or buried. At the same time, a loud siren rang out. Just when I was wondering whether they were having a defense training, thousands of people suddenly shot up from the castle.

“Enemies!”

“What squad are they from?”

“It doesn’t matter. Leave one alive and kill the rest of them!”

“They’re only two of them...?”

They really didn’t look that different than Paul, Ellos, or the soldiers and knights I’ve seen. I hesitated for a split second, but soon realized that they were all wearing something.

It looked like blown-up muscles, and artificial mana circuits ran around them. If I didn’t recognize them, I would bring shame to the Power Basilisk that gave me my Evil Eyes. Right, what they were wearing were powered suits. Plus, I could feel a strong scent of mana from their bodies. There were this many powerful people in a single castle... I wondered how people of Edias continent survived until now.

“Ruyue, just kill them all.”

Of course, since they were aiming for our lives, I couldn’t be

merciful.

[I can kill them?]

“Yep.”

[It'll be hard in this form, so I'll materialize!]

Ruyue spun in a circle and materialized into a mature beastgirl form. The enemies looked surprised, but they soon shot magic attacks towards us.

“Shin, their mana is different than ours! They can absorb our mana and analyze them, and grow resistant to our attacks!”

“What, are those guys Book Walkers' descendants?”

All the invaders I met in foreign worlds had strange abilities. Dealing with Earth's two worlds' enemies was annoying, but it seemed other worlds didn't have it much better.

“Ellos, they can't share the mana they collected with each other, right?”

“Uh, no, nothing like that.”

“Ruyue, you heard that, right?”

[Un!]

“I’ll go first!”

Before the enemies’ attacks reached Ruyue, Licorice shot the magic she had prepared. Huge flames erupted and ravaged the invaders’ front lines.

“Kuaaaaak!”

“They have a powerful magician!”

“Damn it, such a large mana in just an instant!”

“Counterattack!”

In truth, she just had it prepared.

Following Licorice, Ruyue reached out with her hand and blocked all the magic attacks.

[I don’t like their magic power. It’s not pure.]

“It must be their racial trait. Wipe them!”

As if she was waiting for these words, Ruyue kicked off the air. From her hands, white large ice claws rose up and glistened against the sunlight threateningly. The enemies seemed to have expected Ruyue to close range fight, as they fluidly changed their formation. Ones wearing full-body powered suits then came up front.

“They’re advance guards of the continent’s allied force! Don’t let them enter the castle! Kill them here!”

“Come at me, little gi...!”

Ruyue’s claws quickly decapitated them.

“Strong!”

“Damn it, call for reinforcements!”

If reinforcements came, it would become more annoying. I held up my crossbow and sniped the ones who left formation to call for reinforcements. With the power of Lightning God, each crossbow bolt pierced the enemies as miniature lightning bolts. My crossbow, Perfecter Hunter, could consecutively shoot hundreds of bolts. After killing the one who left to call reinforcements, I began to snipe the supporting troops in the back. Because of how much they resembled humans, I couldn’t help the ill-feeling I got whenever I killed one.

I murmured shortly.

“At least I’m getting used to it.”

“You can use crossbows too?”

“Just as a spare.”

“A spare? With this destructive power...?”

Ellos murmured with a dumbfounded face. All the while, the number of invaders was decreasing. The bodies of the deceased fell from the sky and into the castle. These men probably had families and friends to protect too.

However, co-existence was impossible. We had to kill them, and they had to kill us. The only thing we needed from them was knowing their combat capabilities and weaknesses.

Even so, it felt like I was the one invading them. With how easy this fight was, I wasn’t gaining anything from it either. I was only wasting time and feeling uncomfortable. I shouldn’t have listened to Ellos and gotten scared of these antiaircraft missiles.

“Let’s just raise our altitude. We don’t have time to waste like this.”

“But their magical tool is frightening. No matter how high we fly, it’ll reach us.”

“We can just outspeed it. Even if we can’t, there are other ways to block it. Licorice, help us clean this place up.”

“Got it.”

The magic Licorice prepared wasn’t just the flame magic. When she reached out with her hands, strangely white clouds rose up from her arms and swept over the enemies. Soon, they trapped everyone in the area, including Ruyue. Ruyue then released freezing energy at full power.

[Die!]

In an instant, the clouds froze with cracking sounds. Ruyue then dematerialized and left the clouds. The giant ice lost its ability to float and began to fall. Licorice smiled proudly.

“Now that’s an excellent attack. How is it, Dear Husband?”

“Amazing.”

I made a wry smile and patted Licorice. Ellos asked a question with a blank expression.

“You.. Just what have you been doing until now?”

“Not much, just fighting monsters and evil villains... I also visited other worlds a few times.”

Of course, I didn't tell him I defeated worlds' enemies three times. It was Lin who killed one of them, and the other two barely counted as worlds' enemies. In truth, they were more like the world's enemy's underlings. What I told Ellos was more than enough. I could see his eyes shaking severely.

“Really... You...”

“Let's go, Ellos. From now, we're going higher and speeding up. Let's reach Peruta Mountain Range in a day!”

I cut him off and shouted.

If I let him finish, I felt like it would make me unhappy.

Chapter 272. Kahar (6)

After we decimated all the forces that shot up from the castle, we raised our altitude and shot up above the clouds. The enemies didn't try to chase us, but I could feel an enormous amount of energy gathering in one place on the ground. Was this the magical tool Ellos was talking about? The heck? Did the continent's allied force operate a squadron of dragons or something? Why did they focus so much on aerial battle?

"There was a kingdom that raised griffins and operated a group of knights called the Order of the Griffin Knights. The kingdom was located on the edge of the continent, and they were the first to fight the invaders. With their speed and power, they drove the invaders into a corner, but in the end, they fell before Cravis Kingdom could become an empire."

"Because of that weapon?"

"Yeah. At first though, the invaders tried to use flying magical tools rather than the huge energy-consuming magical tool they're using now."

Ellos shrugged. It probably meant their flying magical tools couldn't be used for some reason. To investigate, I spread my mana out into the atmosphere. There were huge clusters of dense mana in several places. Natural mana was overflowing in these places.

"There's so much mana in the atmosphere. So much that it might hinder others from releasing mana."

“It’s not like that in your world?”

“Earth isn’t like that at all. We haven’t had mana until a few years ago, and it’s still tiny compared to here.”

With all the Event Dungeons and monster corpses, Earth’s atmosphere was beginning to hold a fair bit of mana. Still, compared to dungeons or other worlds, it was a miniscule amount.

However, even taking this into account, Edias continent’s mana was strange. The mana on land could just be thought of as bountiful, but the density of mana was too high in the skies. It wasn’t just bountiful, but even prevented other mana from coming out. If someone tried to release mana in this place, he would have a hard time because of the atmospheric mana suppressing all foreign mana. That was why the invaders couldn’t use their flying magical tools.

I could understand why the energy they were gathering on the ground was so large. That giant energy would most likely become weaker as it shot through the atmosphere. They were overflowing it with energy so that it could shoot down anything they wanted even if the attack was weakened by the atmosphere.

What was really strange was that I only realized it when I attempted to detect the mana around me. With such a high density of mana, I usually wouldn’t have had to do such a thing.

After thinking about it for a bit, I finally came to a conclusion. I

had gotten too familiar with this high mana density. Only after hearing that the invaders had trouble using their magical tools and detecting the surrounding mana did I realize that the atmospheric mana could disturb others. But why? Why was I so familiar with this mana? Why was it disturbing others, but not disturbing me?

“Dear Husband!”

When I was lost in thought, Licorice violently shook my shoulders. I was so focused on thinking about this issue that I didn’t realize that the energy on the ground was ready to explode.

With the amount of energy we were facing, going higher would most likely be useless. This wasn’t a problem we could solve by just flying up.

“That’s quite impressive. Lotte, can you dodge it?”

[I can, but not that one.]

Ah, this is where that wyvern holds us down. In that case, we can throw away that wyvern and move Ellos to... No, I promised Lotte I wouldn’t let other men ride her. I couldn’t just go back on my promise.

“Then I’ll just deal with it directly. Licorice, can you help me?”

If I were on ground, I wouldn’t have the confidence to face that much mana. However, it was different up here. I was confident

that the atmospheric mana wouldn't hinder me, and that energy missile would undoubtedly lose half its power before it reached me.

“I'd love to. It's a bit hard to use magic here, but if I'm careful, it'll be more powerful than it normally is. Trust me, Dear Husband!”

Licorice replied confidently and gave me a wink. Immediately afterwards, she reached out with her arms and began to murmur incomprehensible words. I also stood up and pulled out my Chaotic Spear. Pointing at the spot where the energy was gathering, I began to gather my own energy. Because I was holding my spear like I was holding a gun, Ellos looked at me with curious eyes.

“You're attacking and not defending?”

“Defending is for after you fail your attack.”

“I guess you're right.”

I smiled at Ellos' half-impressed, half-dejected comment and fixed my posture.

The other day, I managed to shoot Heroic Strike like a cannonball. I still remembered that feeling.

It was a technique made possible by combining my family spear technique and mana, one that required Peruta Circuit in order to

work. This was because Peruta Circuit captured the energy released by the technique and trapped it within its powerful spin. When the energy struck its target, its energy shot up in one point and detonated.

For a simple reason, it was better to hold my spear like I was holding a gun. It was because I didn't need to use mana to protect my body. It was the same when I shot my spear out with the energy, but that required me to use more energy and prevented me from concentrating all energy into one point.

“Peika, I'm going to shoot just the energy.”

[Huhu, I like that.]

After Peika entered my spear, I pushed in more lightning energy with Lightning God's power. Strengthened by Peika's power, golden lightning traveled across the spear shaft like a sweet sap and gathered at the spear tip. Peruta Circuit took the gathered lightning and created a small bead-like whirlpool. The materialized ball of energy made me smile. Without kidding, we would all die if it exploded here.

I would love to add the power I used when I didn't use mana, but that was out of my capability at the moment. I didn't know how long it would take until I got to that point. All I knew was that I needed time to obtain it for my own.

“For now, I'll do what I can.”

“Dear Husband, now!”

Licorice shouted sharply. The invaders had also fired their concentrated energy at this moment.

Immediately after Licorice’s shout, a giant ring of mana appeared, piercing the clouds and connecting us to the ground. I instantly recognized what it was.

“This is... trajectory assistance?”

“Hurry!”

I didn’t have time to hesitate. I shot my Heroic Strike straight through the center of the concentric trajectory. The ball of whirlpool quickly left my spear tip and accelerated as if it was boosted by a rocket. I didn’t know what Licorice did, but she was taking the atmospheric mana and strengthening my attack.

“She made the mana hers...! Isn’t she a succubus!?”

“She’s a special succubus.”

Didn’t I tell you she was a Succubus Queen? I made a wry smile at Ellos’ surprised expression and followed the trajectory of the energy I released. Heroic Strike flew like a cannonball as it continued to accelerate. On the other hand, the giant energy flying up from the ground was losing its destructive power and speed as it traveled through the ring Licorice created.

I wondered how that was possible, then I realized that what Ellos said was the answer. Licorice had turned the strange atmospheric mana into hers. With that, she was strengthening my attack while weakening the enemy's. By a large amount too!

Its unexpected effect even caused Licorice who casted the magic to widen her eyes.

“Dear Husband's energy amplification factor is too high! What's happening?”

“Is it because the whirlpool form is good at absorbing energy?”

“That's good. Because of its speed, it'll clash much closer to the ground than we antici... Look!”

Immediately afterwards, the two energies clashed and caused an enormous explosion. As Licorice said, the explosion occurred fairly close to the ground. Without stopping at just the explosion, the energies' clash rocked surrounding mana and even caused the mana in the air to detonate. Like throwing a match in a powder keg, the explosion spread like wild fire. Just what was this mana!?

As expected, the chain explosion reached the invaders' castle. Although I couldn't see it well, I could still hear the explosions and screams of the invaders. The castle walls were bound to fall, and the invaders and buildings within were likely to be annihilated. The only problem was...

“Isn’t that explosion still continuing?”

“... It might reach us too.”

While Ellos and I exchanged a look, Licorice shouted in horror.

“Birdbrain, fly! Quickly!”

[This is your fault, bat! You, over there! You better follow me like your life’s on the line! Otherwise, you’ll die!]

[Kurraaaaak!]

The wyvern made a pitiful cry at Lotte’s command. Lotte and the wyvern both flapped their wings urgently and escaped from the chain explosion. It was thanks to being so far from where the explosion took place.

Once things settled down and everyone sighed a breath of relief, Licorice shoved her face towards mine with sparkling eyes.

“Dear Husband, this seems like a great idea! Let’s do this for every castle we see!”

[Do you want to die, bat?]

“But that was pretty fun... Kuhum, I mean, this is a good way to weaken the enemy’s forces! They’ll even have to bring back the troops they sent out to search for the Hero!”

I lightly smacked Licorice’s head.

“I heard you calling it fun, you bomb maniac.”

“Hmph, they’re the ones who used a bomb. We just made use of it!”

“I like it too.”

[Hero!?!]

I thought it was fun too.

“Ellos, how do they communicate?”

“They have a magical tool for communication, but its range isn’t big.”

“Good, let’s see...”

I smiled and opened the continental map. I pointed at the half destroyed, or perhaps fully destroyed castle on the map and looked at Ellos.

“Do you know how far it reaches specifically?”

“Give it to me.”

Ellos approached me on his wyvern, and I threw the map at him. When Ellos began to point at castles out of range from the destroyed castle’s communication magical tool, Lotte screamed.

[W-What’s wrong with you all!? Didn’t you just experience that terrifying explosion!?)

“Lote, if you work hard, we can weaken their forces and secure our safety. As a Blaze Queen, you should be able to do it, right?”

With the honor of her Blaze Queen title challenged, Lotte shouted with teary eyes.

[S-S-Shameless, Hero...! B-But I can do it! Nothing’s impossible for this Blaze Queen!]

“Yeah, Lotte, you can do it. If you succeed, I’ll plume your scales and wash you.”

[Ku... P-Prepare yourself, Hero. Let’s test if you can withstand my speed!]

Lotte was practically wailing. With a mischievous smile, I began

to calculate how many castles we could destroy. At the same time, another wyvern was pitifully crying.

[Ku... Kurraaaaak!]

Three hours after that.

After destroying twenty seven castles, we safely entered Peruta Mountain Range.

Chapter 273. Kahar (7)

[Hu, Huhu... It's been awhile since I felt like I broke through my limit.]

After realizing that she no longer needed to fly at a breakneck speed, Lotte spoke in relief. But seeing as how her tail was still standing straight, she still seemed tense. I stroked her head.

“Thanks. Are you tired?”

[Hmph, this much is a piece of cake for a Blaze Queen! In fact, I'd like to thank Hero for letting me realize my own abilities!]

“Yeah, yeah. Thanks.”

[Like I said, Hero doesn't need to thank me!]

On the other hand, the wyvern Lotte dragged along was half dead. I thought about letting the pitiful creature go, but when I imagined Lotte carrying Ellos and Edias' Hero with her claws, I stopped in my tracks.

“Anyways, this is where Peruta Mountain Range begins? It's already pretty rough.”

The atmospheric mana I felt before was even thicker in this mountain range. Here, even the ground was affected by the high

mana density. This meant that the cause of Edias continent's strange atmospheric mana was here. It was truly absurd. The size of Seoul was nothing compared to Edias continent, but there was something in this mountain range that could affect the entire continent?

I became certain. It was Peruta. It had to be Peruta. Why else would this mountain range have his name? This also explained why this mana felt so familiar to me. After all, my mana was trained using Peruta Circuit.

Besides me, however, everyone else was struggling with Peruta Mountain Range's high mana density.

“Kuk, it's really not easy.”

“It's like something's choking me whenever I breathe. Uuu, to think it could affect me so much, how amazing.”

“... Hup.”

[I really don't like this place.]

‘I see, so the environmental penalty raises the mountain range's difficulty.’ I could understand why it was called the continent's most dangerous place.

Of course, that wasn't it. I didn't know whether it was because it really was Peruta's mana or some other reason, but there was

something only I could feel as I was unaffected.

“The dungeon’s power is being suppressed even more.”

“What?”

Ellos looked back at me with a shocked face.

“Ellos, something’s here, something harmful to explorers.”

“There’s no way... No one can last long in this mountain range.”

“That means it’s the best place to set up a scheme.”

Invaders were apt in magical tools. What was suppressing the dungeon’s power was more likely to be a magical tool than an individual’s ability. Everything made sense in that case. Otherwise, the suppressive force wouldn’t be so strong in this mountain range.

At the same time that I was confident the answer lies here, I became uneasy.

“You said you could feel it, right? The Hero’s energy.”

“Your paper magical tool is proving that, right?”

“Right.”

I crumpled the paper. The air felt bitter. I hoped that this wasn't the case, but it seemed things wouldn't go as I wanted.

“The Hero might really be here...”

In that case, there was a high chance that I...

“Shin, if what you're saying is true...”

“I won't go back now. Let's go, Ellos.”

“Yeah.”

Ellos nodded. Lotte and the wyvern flew up after resting for a bit, and undead suddenly ambushed us in the air.

“What!?”

“Griffins! They're undead griffins!”

Ellos shouted. I didn't recognize them because they were all bones! I looked down below. Undead monsters made of bones were also flocking towards us. This entire mountain range was full of undead creatures, each carrying a great density of mana!

“They’re naturally created, Dear Husband. Giant mana brought them together.”

“We don’t need to waste time killing them. Just break through!”

[Kuaaaaaa!]

For monsters only made of bones, the undead creatures screamed and chased after us. I smacked my lips. This was a great opportunity for me to display my Skull Breaker title, but the title’s effect was also halved by the damned suppressive force.

The Hero was somewhere in this mountain range, somewhere where the magical tool was pointing to. No matter what was waiting for me there, I couldn’t stop. I couldn’t help but think how fortunate I was to have received Radiance from Lin before I came.

[This half-dead trash!]

“Rather than half-dead, aren’t they half-alive?”

[Shut it, bat! Just get rid of them!]

“Hmph!”

Lotte’s flames and Licorice flame and light magic scorched the undead. Although they were also affected by the mountain range, with their leagues, they had no problem dealing with the undead.

It was the same for me.

Although my power as an explorer was being suppressed, Peruta's mana and Radiance both supported me. As such, I could attack them without hesitation. I threw lightning bolts full of Lightning God's power at the undead far away and stabbed the ones that managed to close in with my spear.

Ellos also fought the undead, but it was clear how much he was struggling with his power suppressed. Even so, his eyes were burning passionately.

“Like I'd lose... to these guys!”

“Good, Ellos.”

I replied calmly and stabbed the air with my spear. A shockwave shot out, exploding dozens of undead. At that moment, Lotte roared and breathed out a fire, opening a path in front of us.

[I'm breaking through!]

“Go, Lotte!”

[Screw off, all of you!]

Lotte roared and charged forward. When I looked around after breaking through the encirclement, I could sense the mountain

range's entire undead creatures running towards us. However, they were no longer in my sight.

The ground rumbled, and a volcanic crater far off in the distance began to smoke. I held up the paper I crumpled. Shining particles of light floated up and made an arrow. It was clear where it was pointing to. He was waiting for us there.

[Hero, you're all fired up!]

"I know. I realized I can't fight with my previous mindset."

I closed my eyes and checked my condition. Everything was perfect.

"Let's go. Our goal is that volcano!"

I couldn't remember how many undead were blocking our path, but I knew that we crushed countless undead on our way. When we arrived in front of a cave on the side of the volcano, I was practically covered in crushed bones. I had to ask Ruyue to clean me.

The undead creatures stopped charging. For some strange reason, they didn't dare to approach the volcano. In truth, I felt like I knew why. A meek wind was covering the volcano. It was a gentle, yet powerful wind of mana.

"Let's enter."

“Yeah.”

Ellos nodded solemnly. Together, we entered the cave. Lotte had transformed into her human and stood next to me, while the pitiful wyvern was tied in front of the cave where enemies didn't approach. At the very least, it would be safe.

“The Hero likely didn't hide here by his own will.”

I spoke as we walked through the cave. Ellos flinched, then nodded.

“If there really is a device in here that obstructs the dungeon's power, the invaders might have something to do with it.”

“That means there's something even more important to them than killing the Hero.”

“Shin, do you have something in mind?”

I didn't say anything. I didn't know whether I should. In the end, I just stared at the paper in my hand.

“It's probably nothing much...”

I gave the paper to Licorice and asked a question.

“Licorice, does this thing point to the Hero’s energy? Or is it pointing to his unique mana?”

“The latter, Dear Husband. If it was pointing to the Hero’s energy, it would have responded to Dear Husband too.”

Licorice answered without hesitation. As that was what I was expecting, I nodded and took a step forward. Ellos looked at me, curious as to what my question meant.

“Shin...?”

“It’s nothing. I was just curious.”

“...”

We walked onward. Seemingly because we were getting closer to the center of the volcano, the heat was getting stronger. Although the heat couldn’t affect me, that wasn’t the case for my companions. Licorice wiped off the sweat from her forehead and complained.

“A mere volcano’s heat is making me sweat...”

“Probably because it’s being compressed by high-density mana. Come here.”

I borrowed Ruyue's power to cool my hand and wiped off Licorice's sweat. Licorice blushed and didn't know what to do. Though she was a Succubus Queen, she had never experienced the real thing. Because of this, she was weak when I was the one being intimate.

“W-W-What, Dear Husband!? What's up with the excellent service!?”

“I brought you all the way here, so I'm sorry. Ruyue, make the others feel cool too.”

[Un!]

Ruyue's mana immediately covered the rest of the crew. I straightened Licorice's tangled hair and whispered in her ear.

“... Got it?”

“Un.”

She blushed once again and nodded. I smiled and marched onward.

As the heat became more intense, the density of surrounding mana also increased. It was the same for the power suppressing the dungeon's power. We were close. Something had to appear soon. I was proven to be correct, as we soon encountered people.

“Humans really came all the way here.”

“Huhu, look, Hero... Kak!?”

I immediately charged towards them and swung my spear. My ridiculously fast spear, containing the concentrated power of my body, easily slashed through my target's powered suit and decapitated him. My speed was no different than when I used Divine Speed. However, Divine Speed belonged to the dungeon. In this place where half of my power as an explorer was suppressed, using it was meaningless.

How was I still so fast? It was simple. During the countless days spent climbing the dungeon and countless battles against my enemies, I learned how Divine Speed used my mana and nature's mana. Knowing how mana moved meant that I could imitate it. I didn't need to activate it as a skill.

Of course, this was the first time I used it in a real battle. Still, my intuition told me to try it rather than using Divine Speed, and my intuition was correct. In fact, I learned quite a lot from the feeling of my body accelerating and the flow of mana. It still couldn't be compared to Divine Speed at full strength, but once I got used to it and improved upon it, I had the feeling it could surpass Divine Speed, which was already mastered and had no room to evolve.

“You bas—”

Before he could finish his sentence, I decapitated him too. My

lightning-fast attack ripped apart his powered suit and instantly ended his life. With the two sentries taken care of, I dusted off the blood from my spear.

“Let’s go. They should be waiting for us inside.”

“Shin, you...”

“Ellos, let’s go.”

I continued on without hesitation. As expected, many invaders were waiting for us there. They were all strong. By the dungeon’s standard, they would have all passed the 75th floor.

“How come he’s unaffected?”

“Who cares? Just crush him and question him later!”

Currently, I was weaker than them. If it wasn’t for Radiance, I might have been gravely injured already. However, I’ve experienced fighting against stronger enemies countless times before. Each time, my limit of my techniques reached new realms.

So what did I need to fear?

“Kuk, this Hero is quick!”

“You can’t even neutralize a weakened Hero!?”

“You, why don’t you help... Kuhuk!”

I roused Mad Typhoon’s power. Whether it was magical attacks or physical attacks, their attacks only worked if they touched me. Mad Typhoon’s fierce whirlpool twisted their attacks’ trajectories, and even if they hit me, they only glazed me. Meanwhile, I continued to thrust my spear using the principle of Divine Speed. With my spearmanship, my attacks already came from angles that were hard to dodge. With its lightning-like speed, there was no way for them to dodge my spear.

“You won’t touch my Hero!”

“Argh, you guys are annoying! You’re wearing ugly clothes, too!”

On the other hand, Lotte and Licorice were practically unaffected besides having their mana oppressed. Since the enemies were also affected by the mountain range’s characteristic, they could easily fend them off. In an instant, dozens of invaders died, and they finally faltered back.

“A-Anymore would be wasting our strength.”

“We’re not strong enough.”

“They have to come inside anyway.”

They were right. No matter how many enemies were waiting for me, I planned to go in. I knew who was waiting for me there.

“Everyone, let’s go.”

“Shin, how!? No, why!?”

“Shouldn’t you know the answer without asking me?”

Ellos fell silent.

Even if we turned back now, we wouldn’t gain anything. What I wanted, what the enemy waiting for me inside wanted, and what Ellos wanted, we had to decide it now. I walked onward. The pathway soon came to an end, and a giant space opened up. Considering the heat, we were likely close to the crater. No, this place was the crater. I could see the sky from the gigantic hole in the ceiling.

Furthermore...

“I’ve been waiting for you, Earth’s Hero.”

There was a man standing in the center. It was a middle-aged man wearing a thin black powered suit clearly different than rest of the invaders. The terrifying energy he was releasing made me doubt my chances of victory even if I got back all of the dungeon’s

power.

“Oh, young and handsome. You even have two beautiful gals with you. My, my. My eyes are quite happy.”

He looked at my companions and smiled in satisfaction. Behind him, I could see a giant crystal. A crystal releasing a mystical, yet ominous light. Near it was the Hero we were looking for.

With only his head.

“Sir Kasina, well done. You really succeeded.”

“It was bound to succeed.”

Ellos replied calmly. I shouted.

“Ruyue!”

Chapter 274. Kahar (8)

A presence behind me disappeared. Obviously, it was Ellos' presence. The world's enemy in front of me widened his eyes.

“You’re going to kill him?”

“I froze him for now. I don’t want to get stabbed from behind, you see.”

I replied calmly. The world's enemy seemed to hesitate for a moment, then he asked.

“I couldn’t feel a thing. How did you do it so quickly?”

“If I tell you, will you tell me too? How you enticed Ellos. I doubt it was your face that did it.”

As I said that, I held up my Chaotic Spear. The reason I could freeze Ellos so quickly was simple. Ellos had already been within Ruyue's domain from that time I asked her to cool everyone off.

“... You’re not bad, even better than Sir Kasina.”

I aimed my spear at him, signaling that I wanted to fight quickly. However, he didn’t even think to take out his weapon and laughed playfully. As I thought, he was different. He was different than all the other worlds' enemies. If I had to find someone like him, it

would only be Luka continent's Demon Lord.

“The boldness to march in here, fully knowing that it's a trap. The decisiveness in killing your friend the moment you learned of his betrayal. Most importantly, that mysterious power overflowing within you even with the dungeon's power gone.”

He held up his hand covered in his powered suit and rubbed his chin. At the same time, my interest in him grew. From his movements, I could feel a depth of martial arts on a completely different level than any of the enemies I've faced so far. He seemed to have thought the same thing. I could tell by the way he was smiling.

“This is quite troubling. Hm...”

In the next moment, he snapped his fingers as if he came to a conclusion.

“Earth's Hero, why don't you ally with us?”

“Ally?”

“Yes, ally. Become my friend.”

I was wondering what he was going to say, but to think it would be this dull. I snorted and retorted.

“I refuse.”

“No, don’t worry. That woman you guys call Lord, her influence won’t reach us here.”

I flinched. He was a world’s enemy. It made sense that he knew this much. But what made me flinch wasn’t the fact that he knew about the Dungeon Lord, but the way he said it. He was full of leisure as if he knew something much greater.

“You... What is your plan?”

“To tell you the truth, I planned on joining hands with the Edias continent to propel my plan, but it only makes sense that I change ship now that a stronger partner appeared.”

“Partner, eh? You think that’s an appropriate word between an attacker and a defender?”

Although that’s what I said, I was still somewhat interested. If he planned on telling me more, there was no reason to refuse. After all, part of the reason I was working as a Dimensional Mercenary was to gain more information about the attackers. I was somewhat hoping that this would happen.

He spoke.

“Of course it’s appropriate. We’re all being toyed by them, so we’re fellow victims.”

“ ... ”

“Let me explain something. First of all, I don't have the world's power.”

“ ... ”

“You're not surprised?”

“I knew.”

“What!?”

He wasn't a Hero, nor did he carry the world's power in his body. Because of it, I was wracking my brain at the moment, trying to find out who Edias continent's Hero was. The man in front of me seemed to be surprised that I could recognize the owner of a world's power. He probably thought it was the attacking side's privilege.

Soon, however, he composed himself. What he then said made me flustered.

“But you see, I once had a world's power. To be exact, I retrieved it after killing Keteuce continent's Hero.”

I felt like I was smacked in the head.

“What...?”

What did he mean?

“It’s simple. Edias continent isn’t our first target. Before we came here, we fought the people of Keteuce continent and came out victorious in glory. Sadly, that glory didn’t last long.”

“You, what are you saying...?”

“Curious? ... Should I tell you?”

“You liar...!”

Despite what I said, I was shrinking back. Curious? Of course, I was. But I never expected his story to be so far beyond my knowledge. If what he said was right, the invaders had lost the world’s power even after destroying one world. For a moment, I thought of the Demon Lord. Was he also in the same position...?

“I’m going to tell you something you don’t know. Listen carefully. Once you do, I’m sure you’ll join my side. Just like how Sir Kasina did not too long ago.”

Nearby, an invader gritted his teeth. His hostility wasn’t aimed at me. It was aimed at something far bigger and far far away. I felt dizzy. Only when Licorice grabbed me from the back did I realize, I

had been staggering.

“It’s a simple story. The reason we’re facing each other as enemies. I’m going to tell you about that.”

“Go on. My ears are open.”

“Good. At first, we were just like you and the inhabitants of the Edias continent, normal humans living normal lives. Ah, to be exact, we’re a bit different than you humans. We’re a bit smarter but weaker physically. But, in a broader sense, we’re still humans.”

“And?”

“One day, babies stopped being born.”

He voice was calm, but hidden within it was a clear and sharp fury.

“Babies were born dead. No magical tool or prayer could save them. There were no new lives, and old lives couldn’t laugh even as they died.”

He continued.

“Crops withered and fell in the middle of growing. Livestock collapsed in the middle of giving birth and died in the middle of giving birth. Even monsters, who were humanity’s enemy,

couldn't escape this fate. The flow of mana became stiff. It became hard to recover from injuries. It was hell. It was as if the world had died. All remaining lives were slowly dying."

"That's what happens to a world with its world's power taken."

"Right. You must have had a clear enemy to direct your hostility. But we weren't even given that. From when we woke up in the morning to when we barely fell asleep at night, everyone cried tears of pain. They hated the earth, hated the heaven, and hated God. Even so, nothing changed. Except for one thing."

I felt like I knew what the one thing was.

"We had to grab onto it. We had to throw ourselves at it. We knew. Beyond the pathway that appeared on our continent, we had to kill them, decapitate them, and steal their power of life. We knew that was our only hope. What would you have done in that case, Hero?"

"I would have marched into them."

I couldn't lie. 'I can't hurt innocent people living peacefully, so I'll obediently die with my world.' I couldn't bring myself to say that.

"Honest, how honest. As I thought, I really like you."

"Just continue with your story. Didn't you say you conquered the

Keteuce continent?”

“That’s right. I did, not someone else, but me. With my own hands, I grabbed the neck of their so-called Hero and snapped it off. Then, I obtained his power. Instead of our withered world, we settled in Keteuce continent. We spared those who surrendered and mercilessly killed those who didn’t. It took a long, long time, but eventually, every human in Keteuce continent had the blood of our people flowing in them. Just like that, we reclaimed peace. We didn’t need to do anything anymore.”

“Then why did you invade Edias continent?”

“That’s a silly question, Earth’s Hero. Didn’t I tell you the answer before?”

“My name is Kang Shin.”

“Yes, Kang Shin, my name is Hazen.”

Hazen stared at me fixedly, as if he was waiting for my reaction.

“It was because Keteuce continent’s power disappeared. It wasn’t anyone’s fault. It disappeared as if it never existed in the first place.”

I fell silent.

It wasn't that I had never imagined it. In fact, I had considered it once before. But I never believed that it could actually happen. I didn't want to.

"I still can't forget that day. When I found out that all babies born that day died, when I found out that the overflowing power of the Hero and the power of the world disappeared from within me, I realized... The nightmare wasn't over. No..."

His voice stuck in my ears like tar.

"I realized, the nightmare won't end. It simply continues. Infinitely."

I shook my head.

"Why? Why did the world's power disappear again? Overflowing worlds and lack of power to support them. Wasn't that why worlds were paired up?"

"Right, that's what I thought too at first. Were there more worlds that needed to be erased? But that was impossible. World's power that once supported all worlds couldn't have had just diminished. Someone, an existence that we can't even come to perceive, was toying with us. Maintaining worlds? That was all bullshit! A pretext and an excuse! They might even be looking at us fighting each other and leisurely betting on which side would win. Almost like watching warriors fight to their deaths in a Colosseum."

“You’re saying that’s the reason they erased a world’s power and paired up worlds?”

“Right. So you understand.”

I looked back at Licorice and Lotte. They both shook their heads.

“I’ve never heard anything like it, Hero. That man... has lived long. His war began far earlier than ours.”

“It’s the same for me, Dear Husband. To be honest, I can’t believe him.”

Hazen smirked.

“Regardless, we crossed over to Edias continent. It was hard. We had obtained peace after a fierce war, so we were too indulged in it. A countless number of our comrades died, and in the process, we killed a countless number of our enemies. Then, a thought suddenly crossed my mind. If this continued, we would eventually perish. We would forever be toyed by them. Unless we took the initiative from them, it would continue until not a single piece of flesh or bone remained from us.”

“And... This crystal is the answer you came up with?”

“That’s right!”

He nodded excitedly.

“No matter how many worlds we conquer, we realized we could lose the world’s power in the blink of an eye. At that point, a question popped up in my head. What the hell was this dungeon that helped the defending side? Just who was this Lord woman that she had such an enormous power? Kang Shin, don’t you want to find out?”

“I do, but without her, Earth would have been annihilated by our enemies long ago.”

“Oh dear, if you trust her just because you received her help, you’ll end up with an axe to your back. Here, look.”

He pointed at the crystal taking up most of the space in the area. The crystal was sucking in surrounding mana and releasing corrupted mana at the same time. That was what restrained my power.”

“As you can probably feel, it’s an amazing thing. While fighting the so-called dungeon explorers from Keteuce continent and Edias continent, we couldn’t help but analyze them. Obviously, we found a way to weaken the dungeon’s power. All we needed were the material to build the magical tool and the mana to control it. We managed to find all the material, but the mana problem wasn’t something we could resolve in Keteuce continent. But this place, this Peruta Mountain Range, was different. There was more than enough mana gathered here to operate the magical tool.”

In the middle of hearing him brag, I realized something. I immediately voiced my suspicion.

“That magical tool, it’s complete?”

“Amazing! So you see it!”

He smirked.

“But it’s still too big! Its core function hasn’t been realized either. We have to make it much smaller, small enough to carry it. We have to raise its output, too! But it’s possible! We can do it. And when it’s complete, that’s when you, partner, come in. You take it and enter the dungeon.”

“You want me to kill the Dungeon Lord?”

He bit the question I asked casually.

“We should share its power. Then, we’ll form an alliance. Starting with each world’s leaders, we’ll begin to mix. Eventually, all of humanity will intermarry. A countless number of couples will be formed between two worlds, and when their children are born, the two worlds will start to become one. It doesn’t matter even if one of the worlds’ power disappears. Why? Because the blood of both our worlds will be flowing in everyone’s veins!”

“Ho.”

I let out a short exclamation of admiration. He seemed even more excited at my reaction, as he shouted even louder.

“If we can control the dungeon’s power, which can open the pathway to countless worlds, what will we have to fear? Nothing! We’ll be able to enter any world as we please!”

“With power.”

“Right, with infinite power! In the end, we will become the victors! Indomitable victors that no one can threaten! Invincible victors that won’t be toyed by anyone’s hands!”

“So you were just delusional. I’m starting to doubt whether Keteuce continent even existed.”

I spoke bluntly. However, he unexpectedly sneered at my response.

“Can you say that when you’re feeling the magical tool’s power? Kang Shin, do you think this power won’t reach the Dungeon Lord?”

“Do you think it’ll be that simple? Do you think the Dungeon Lord is even killable? Even if you killed her, will you be able to take her power?”

“She is just a fool with an incredible power! The dungeon is her, and she is the dungeon. If she’s in front of us, we can analyze her. We can even analyze gods! Taking her power after killing her will be even simpler. All power can be held in a container!”

I was doubtful, truly doubtful. However, I held in my curiosity and asked.

“Why did you approach Ellos?”

“We heard from other explorers that Sir Kasina had ties to another world’s Hero. Plus, he’s currently the true head of the continent’s allied force.”

True head. I thought of the way Ellos ordered the empire’s knights. He was the disciple of the Hero and friend of the empire’s crown prince. He was fitting of the title ‘true head’.

“Plus, he was the Hero’s disciple. Right, the person who can most easily lead the Hero into a trap. And, he was wise. He understood what I said, and he had the brains to cooperate with us to save his continent’s people.”

No, that’s impossible. You don’t know it. That he lost his fiancée to your forces!

However, there was still something I needed to find out, something I needed to confirm. I asked.

“If you couldn’t take the Hero’s power from that Hero you killed, that means he wasn’t the Hero when you killed him?”

“That’s also right! The Hero suffered grave injuries in one of our previous fights. He fled with his disciple and transferred the power to him. Besides me and his disciple, no one else knows this. After all, the disciple hid the fact that he became the Hero. If he hides it, no one else can find out, unless they’re people like us.”

Although I knew the answer, I still asked.

“Who’s the disciple?”

“Isn’t that obvious? It’s Sir Kasina, of course! The one you froze.”

In that moment, I slowly closed my eyes.

I felt like I finally arrived at the answer.

The reason Ellos acted so strangely.

Why we had to come here, and what power he had. How he could hide the fact that he became the Hero from me, and what he planned to do from now.

“Now, I’d like you to make up your mind. Who should we kill? You should know the answer.”

“No, Shin doesn’t have the answer. I do.”

A voice rang out from above, but before I could look up, I first looked behind. The ice I believed to have trapped Ellos was shattered into pieces.

I turned to the direction of the voice. There, Ellos was standing on the top of the giant crystal.

“The answer was there from the very beginning, from the moment Baruella died from your hands.”

“Sir Kasina...!? Who’s Baruella? Are you betraying us because of just one person?”

Ellos smirked without answering him.

“Shin, you knew everything, right?”

I answered.

“Yeah.”

“Really?”

“Yeah.”

“And you still let me be.”

“I did.”

“You didn’t even go full out when you froze me, huh?”

“Of course not. You’re nowhere strong enough to break Ruyue’s full-power ice.”

“Thanks, friend. You trusted me.”

“You should thank me.”

“But you shouldn’t have trusted me.”

I became speechless for a moment. I thought about what to say and chose the easy words.

“You’re probably right. I only just found out. If I knew earlier, I would have killed you.”

“But to bring him here without invoking suspicion, I needed you to be the bait. Sorry.”

Ellos bowed to me. Soon, he lifted up his head. His eyes were dyed blood red.

“Die with me.”

“Sir Kasina, don’t touch that magical tool!”

“Hazen, do you know? In this continent, there’s a story. A story about a God who conceals himself without anyone knowing. When this god appears, he breaks and destroys everything, including himself.”

Ellos smiled with his teeth bared. Not only his eyes, but his entire body was being dyed red. In that instant, the flash in Hazen’s eyes changed. He hadn’t paid attention to Ellos in the slightest, but he now realized he had the power to make him.

“STOP HIM! NOW!”

“I am Kahar, God of Concealment and Vengeance.”

Indeed, his ability to conceal himself was top-notch. Neither Hazen nor I could detect him at all.

A stream of red light shot up from his body and penetrated Hazen’s subordinates. I instantly knew that it wasn’t just mana. Even amongst gods’ powers, that thing was wicked. It was pulling out his blood and soul altogether.

Ellos held up his sword beginning to drip with bloodred aura. Without even a hint of hesitation, he stabbed it into the crystal.

“Everyone, die with me.”

An enormous energy exploded. Feeling the storm of mana that no one, not even Hazen, could come out unscathed...

I smiled.

Chapter 275. Kahar (9)

“That crazy bastard!”

Hazen shouted as he gritted his teeth. The powered suit he was wearing vibrated quietly, and he was in front of Ellos in the next moment. He held up his fist.

“You dare trick me!?”

“It’s too late, Hazen.”

Ellos laughed. His sword was already deep inside the crystal. The violet colored crystal pulsed red like a glass heart. At the same time, the surrounding mana began to detonate. Hazen punched Ellos and sent him flying, but as Ellos said, it was too late. There was no way to recover the crystal.

“Kang Shin, you’ll die too! Help me stop it!”

“Didn’t you hear? It’s too late.”

Amidst the thundering explosion of mana, I roused Peruta Circuit and retorted calmly. I looked behind me. Neither Licorice nor Lotte was there. Mm, they properly escaped when I whispered them to.

“Hu...!”

Ellos staggered up and looked at me. His body was also shining periodically. I was certain that he was perfectly connected to the crystal.

When Ellos got up completely, one of his arm exploded. At the same time, a part of the crystal also exploded with a thundering roar, dyeing the surroundings red. This was probably what it was like to witness a bomb go off up close.

“Your friends aren’t here... Did you see through my plan that much, friend?”

“Yep. Though, I didn’t think you’d detonate the crystal. Also...”

I held up my spear. The superdense mana around us shot towards the reddened crystal and exploded. It was a truly catastrophic amount of mana.

“You’re no longer my friend.”

When Ellos died, the crystal would detonate completely. In other words, the entire space around us would explode. Perhaps, the entire Peruta Mountain Range would explode and even continue out to the rest of the continent. That was how overwhelming the amount of mana gathered here was. Kahar. As Peruta said, he was a god that destroyed everything, even the things he wanted to protect. Thinking about it now, Peruta hadn’t mentioned him randomly. He had undoubtedly felt an ill omen and had advised me to be wary of him.

“Damn it, Kang Shin! Don’t kill him now!”

Hazen seemed to have realized that Ellos was connected to the crystal. Regardless of what they were saying, I rolled my eyes, looking for the last thing I needed to obtain. This was the only thing I couldn’t prepare for. I could only depend on my luck.

“What are you looking for? That crater’s the only place you can run, Shin.”

Ellos pointed to the sky and spoke. I followed his finger and looked up at the sky. Beyond the giant hole in the faraway ceiling was a night sky. It was so far that even Divine Speed couldn’t help me escape. There were only few seconds left until the explosion.

“Da... Damn it! Etos! O God of Destruction!”

Hazen had a god’s true name, one belonging to a Destruction God. As I thought, he was incredible. Considering his power, I felt he rather suited the Destruction God.

Shiva’s power boiled inside me. It wanted to break out. Did it want to determine who was superior as a Destruction God? However, it seemed Hazen’s power wasn’t enough. He probably wanted to destroy Ellos’ energy covering the crystal, but as they were both gods’ true names, that was difficult to do.

Mana exploded. It broke through the whirlpool surrounding my

mana and injured me. Most of the crystal shattered and my explorer power was restored, but that wasn't enough. Even Hazen, who had used his god's true name, was being injured. There was no way I could be safe without doing anything.

Still, I was smiling.

“Thanks, Ellos. I found out thanks to you.”

“Shin...!?”

Ellos retorted in a flustered tone. In the next moment, I used Divine Speed. I approached him, and kicked him.

“So I'll let you find your own death.”

“Kak!”

Ellos flew straight across the sky and smashed against the crystal. Red mana shot out from the crystal and grabbed Ellos. Before Ellos could say anything, he froze. The crystal had begun assimilating with Ellos.

“What are you doing!?”

“That'll increase the destructive power.”

“And you still did it...!? Wasn’t he once your friend!?”

“Friend?”

I found it absurd.

“Someone who used my life to get his revenge? That’s not a friend. He only used me as a chess piece.”

“You... Didn’t you say you trusted him!?”

“Me? How could I? I could see his scheme from miles away.”

I smirked and shook my head.

“But I knew he wanted to kill you. No matter what sacrifice he had to make.”

To be honest, I wasn’t confident I could win against Hazen. The magical tool suppressing explorers’ power was too strong. Hazen had also reigned supreme in almost two dimensional world wars. It was impossible to fight such a world’s enemy without using the dungeon’s power.

“So I also used him as a chess piece.”

“Kang Shin, you... You!”

I didn't think Ellos could kill him, but I expected him to weaken the world's enemy. Ellos responded to my expectation outstandingly. In fact, he even went beyond my expectation. The mana gathered in the crystal wasn't just enough to kill Hazen, it was enough to ruin the entire continent. The only downside was that it might kill me too.

“Hah! In the end, you're also a Hero! Someone who stands on the peak of such dirty worlds can't possibly be clean!”

“Shouldn't you worry about your subordinates than me?”

Almost in response to my words, mana once again exploded. This time, it was far bigger. Most of Hazen's subordinates were swept away by the explosion. Hazen realized what happened and screamed in despair.

“Kuaaaaaa! Kasinaaaaaaaa! Someone like you, someone like you!!”

No matter what happened, no matter what anyone said, I didn't care. I looked up at the sky. From the giant hole to the holes in the surface of walls leading down to the floor I was standing on. I looked at the spiral helix radiating out.

How long did his vestige stay here? It was engraved so clearly and had withstood countless years. I could only admire his divinity.

“Hu...”

‘Peruta.’ I murmured to myself.

He was amazing. It was a power and vestige befitting a god. I was somewhat doubtful, but it really was here. If it wasn’t for Ellos, I wouldn’t have noticed until this entire space was destroyed.

“Overlord, Trishula.”

I quietly recited two powers and held up my spear. Peruta Circuit’s extreme spin made it difficult for me to carry myself, but I endured it. I could do it. I should be able to.

“No, it can’t end like this! Our hope! I swear I will not—”

Finally, the crystal exploded along with the entire surrounding space. Ellos was the first one to explode, and Hazen, who was resisting with the Destruction God’s power, couldn’t withstand the current of mana and transformed into a stream of blood. A world’s enemy, who successfully conquered a world and bared the ambition to devour the dungeon, died in vain.

However, I didn’t have the time to pay attention to anything else.

“Let’s do this, Peruta...!”

In the middle of the overwhelming blood-red mana, I accelerated Peruta Circuit. I tuned my breathing and whirlpool to the helix

Peruta drew. I didn't need to two whirlpools to cover my body and spear. I only need one whirlpool centered around the Peruta Circuit in my body. Just one was enough.

“Huooooooooop!”

An enormous amount of mana rushed into my body. It attacked Ellos and Hazen whimsically, but as soon as I pulled it towards me, it happily shot towards me as if it found the master it had been waiting for. At the same time, Peruta Circuit continued to vibrate, absorbing and spinning everything.

The mana filling up the surrounding space perfectly suited me. Still, there was just too much. A current of mana I had never wielded before creaked to escape my control. As it reeled to destroy me, I desperately straightened my breathing. If I missed this moment, there was nothing else I could do.

To top it off, another type of mana rushed towards me. It was the storm caused by the shattered blood-red crystal that swallowed Hazen and Ellos. Tens of thousands of crystals, imbued with the giant crystal's power and Kahar's power, didn't follow my command and swept towards me like a wild beast.

My armor became tattered, my hair was cut, and blood spurted out from my body. My vitality fell to a miserable level, and it felt like my soul was being yanked out. Still, the spin continued. I had long forgotten about any pain. This was also a type of mana. I should be capable of controlling it. Mana followed an even larger mana!

I couldn't even tell where I was. Volcano? Would it still look like one? I didn't know. I didn't even care what condition my body was in. I only focused on one thing. This giant whirlpool I had to create.

“I can... do it...!”

At that moment, a piece of the blood-red crystal was sucked into the whirlpool surrounding my body and began to spin. Next, more and more crystals became incapable of withstanding the current of mana and was absorbed by my whirlpool.

The mana, which detonated the entire space, didn't spread and continued to be collected. The whirlpool roiling around me slowly compressed itself. In the process, the tens of thousands of scattered crystals were beginning to become one again.

I breathed. A terrifying amount of mana had come inside me and was accelerating Peruta Circuit's spin. The surrounding space crumbled and the hole connecting the sky to the ground became larger. The whirlpool Peruta drew was completely gone. However, I was now displaying that whirlpool with my own body.

Peruta's mana covering this place, no, this whole continent, was rushing towards me and forming a whirlpool. Almost as if it had been waiting for this moment.

I body floated up automatically. I was in the center of the whirlpool. Now, nothing could injure me. Mana circulated around

me calmly, and the pieces of the blood-red crystal compressed themselves as they fused together. At that moment, I realized.

That I had become one with Peruta Circuit.

“Ah, aaaaah!”

Unable to withstand the sense of ecstasy, I shouted. The mana filling up my body was beginning to change me from the inside. The bracelet Lin gave me, Radiance, then scattered. It didn't disappear. Everything forming the bracelet had melted down and was flowing into me along with mana.

The current sensation was incomparable to when I first equipped Radiance. An overwhelming mana shattered my body and reforged it from the very beginning. I disappeared entirely, leaving only Peruta Circuit behind, then reappeared around Peruta Circuit from head to toe. It was a body formed from only Peruta Circuit's mana, one that other trivial mana couldn't dare to approach.

Still, it wasn't enough. Peruta Circuit, in the end, belonged to Peruta. I needed something that belonged to me. Only then would I take a 'step' forward. I could only realize this now that I had gotten this strong. No one needed to tell me, I was enlightened naturally.

With my hair being reconstituted, the current of mana began to subside.

“Huu...”

I slowly opened my eyes. Neither the superdense mana nor the blood-red crystal was here. I was floating in empty air. Volcano? It had long since disappeared. Only magma was boiling from the deep depths.

“Dear Husband!”

A voice rang out from far away. Lotte and Licorice was flying up towards me. I smiled and waved my hands.

“Are you two safe?”

“Dear Husband!”

Licorice called me yearningly. They looked fine on the outside, but were they hurt!? I rushed towards them anxiously but stopped in place when I heard Licorice’s shouting.

“Wear something! You’re too lewd!”

Chapter 276. Third Season (1)

“... Ah.”

In Licorice's hands were Pure Black Desire, which had reverted to its bracelet form, tattered Felixes' Lava Cape, and my other items. When my body was reconstructing itself, Pure Black Desire and my other items seemed to have fallen down. Thankfully, Licorice had picked them up.

Pure Black Desire had an indestructible effect, so I didn't need to worry about it. Felixes' Lava Cape could also auto-repair itself even if only a single piece of it remained. Unfortunately for the other equipment...

Ugh, did all my other items go to waste? For a moment, a chill went down my back. Hoping that it wasn't true, I caught the bracelet Licorice threw at me and equipped it.

I felt my physical ability heightening in an instant, as a black metal covered my body. Uuu, it felt cold against bare skin.

I lowered my altitude slightly and faced the two girls. Licorice gave me the rest of the equipment wrapped into a bundle by my cape. From a glance, it looked like the cape was salvageable, but the accessories were the problem.

Items I obtained not too long ago like Shadow-Hidden Blade, Thorn Throne, and Echo Ring seemed fine. Thankfully, their disabilities had held out. On the other hand, not even a trace of

Golden Teardrop or Flesh Golem's Second Finger remained. They were low-grade accessories, and the stats they gave didn't affect me that much either. Still, I still felt like I suffered a loss as they had been with me for a long time.

“What a waste.”

“Yeah, what a... What are you looking at?”

It seemed Licorice was regretting something else. Realizing that her gaze was fixated on a certain part of my body, I smacked her head. Just like how I couldn't go back in time to be naked again, the broken accessories couldn't be reversed. I just had to take care of the ones I had left.

“Hero, what happened?”

Lotte asked inexplicitly, and I replied in an extremely simple manner.

“Everything other than me disappeared.”

“...”

Lotte became lost for words. I made a wry smile and opened my inventory. Right, it opened. It had to. The invaders' magical tool, the violet crystal, no longer remained on this continent. I put all the equipment and accessories in my inventory and stretched. As I closed the inventory, an enormous power poured into me.

Obviously, it was the power of the explorer given to me by the dungeon and by Sherafina.

“What happened to the world’s power, Dear Husband?”

“I sucked it in too. I couldn’t isolate it given the circumstance. Still...”

I closed my eyes. The moment Ellos died, the world’s power left his body. Immediately afterward, the surrounding current of mana swept it away, and my whirlpool eventually trapped it. Just like that, it became a part of me naturally.

I managed to prevent it from mixing with the world’s power I had, but now that it was inside me, it wasn’t going to leave easily. The more I thought about it, the angrier I got. Ellos, this bastard. As a Hero, he used himself as a suicide bomb. I knew he loved Baruella, but that was overdoing it! And... and!

“Aaaaah, damn it! That son of a bitch!”

“Calm down, Dear Husband, your mana’s erupting out.”

“Ah, right. Sorry.”

I calmed myself down thanks to Licorice. A truly enormous amount of mana was used during the process of reconstructing my

body from scratch, but the amount of mana still circulating around my body through Peruta Circuit's path was still nothing to scoff at. It seemed to roughly be double the amount I had before...

“Sherafina should have seen through me by now, right? Let's see.”

For the first time in a long time, I opened my status window.

[Name: Kang Shin Race: Human Sex: Male

Class: Elementalist (Sub – Skill Mixer, Tamer) Title: Lightning God Rank: Platinum 9

Level: 81

HP – 352,180/352,180 MP – 497,590/497,590

Strength – 539(+215) Dexterity – 572(+195) Constitution – 763(+71)

Intelligence – 144(+70) Magic – 879(+185) Charm – 407(+130) Luck – 182(+90)

Normal Skills – High-rank Martial Arts (Master – Attack power, attack speed +20%), Peruta – Mad Typhoon (Lv 8), High-rank Crossbow Marksmanship (Lv 2), Wind King's Rage (Lv 5), High-rank Heroic Strike (Lv 5), High-rank Provoke (Lv 9), Divine Speed (Master), Return (Master), Peruta Circuit (Master), Dimensional

Travel (Lv 5), Overwhelm (Lv 7), Absolute Soul (Lv 7), Weapon Swap (Lv 7), Captivation (Lv 5), Deific Manifestation, Riding, Mistification, Breath of Death

Class Skills – High-rank Spirit Mastery (Lv 9), High-rank Spirit Aura (Lv 9), High-rank Elemental Control (Lv 9), High-rank Elemental Contract (Lv 9), Lightning Spear Storm (Lv 7), High-rank Elemental Blade (Lv 7), High-rank Elemental Tempest (Lv 8)

Subclass Skill – Endow Skill, Skill Synthesis, Taming (Master), Spirit of the Collector, Spirit of the Mixer, Spirit of the Tamer (Master)]

After checking out my status, I made an exclamation of surprise.

“Wow.”

I couldn't believe what I was seeing. This was the result of the dungeon's power being added to my body's true strength. There wasn't a single stat that didn't go up. Intelligence increased by around 50, magic and charm increased by around 100, strength and dexterity increased by around 200, and constitution and magic increased by around 400. I could clearly see which areas this bodily reconstruction strengthened.

“Nah, let's forget it. They're just numbers.”

I couldn't overestimate myself just because of stats. After closing the status window, I made a vow to myself. A power that solely

belonged to me. If I could use the dungeon's power, I would gladly use it, but when I couldn't, I had to rely on my own power to defeat the enemy. The Demon Lord most certainly had a method of nullifying the dungeon's power.

“She even measured my skill growth. What a frightening woman.”

I looked at the mastered Peruta Circuit and smiled. She could have said something, but she didn't. I found it pretty cute.

“Dear Husband, are you okay?”

“Ah, yeah... Nevermind Ellos. Let's go back, I'm exhausted.”

“Go back? Where?”

I pondered for a moment before I spat out.

“To the empire.”

On our way back, we noticed the decrease in the density of atmospheric mana.

“Wow, it's finally breathable!”

“Is it?”

For me, I felt it was a shame considering how well I could wield that mana. Of course, since I didn't plan on living on this continent, that feeling didn't last long.

“Dear Husband is really terrifying. Did you take the entire continent's mana...?”

“No, probably not. The mana density will probably go back up the farther you get from the mountain range. Eventually, it'll balance itself out with only being thinned out slightly.”

“Did Dear Husband expect this to happen from the beginning? Since entering Edias continent?”

“If you lower the scale to a fifth of what happened, then yeah.”

I expected to fight the world's enemy, and I vowed to find Peruta's vestige. I suspected that Ellos may have changed, and I felt like I would grow stronger once again.

Everything I expected to happen did happen, just in a far explosive scale. This was the result.

“If Ellos didn't make Kahar's power go berserk, the magical tool wouldn't have exploded, and if the magical tool didn't explode, Hazen would have been fine and I wouldn't have grown to this extent.”

If Ellos didn't do what he did and I had to fight Hazen, I would have needed to use Shiva's Eye. Could I have won? I wasn't confident. Hazen was powerful, and he even had the power of the Destruction God Etos. Even if I won, I would have had to bare a huge sacrifice. Even if I found Peruta's vestige, I might not have mastered Peruta Circuit.

Back then, I was completely devoted to Peruta Circuit with my life on the line. It only made sense, as failure would have meant death. Thankfully, Peruta's mana cooperated with me, and I managed to go beyond making Peruta Circuit totally mine and achieved a type of evolution.

"Dear Husband really changed."

"Yeah, I did."

I nodded in agreement. I couldn't lie. After all, I had transformed from head to toe.

"You look tired, Dear Husband."

"... Licorice."

It seemed that wasn't what Licorice meant. She was talking about something other than just my outer appearance.

"You can trust me. Got it, Dear Husband?"

With that, Licorice embraced my back. I didn't say anything in response and simply accepted her. Her body's natural scent seemed to console me.

"Dear Husband is my most precious person... Okay?"

"What about the other succubi?"

"Dummy, is now the time to talk about that? Just accept that Dear Husband is my most precious person!"

Indeed, my question was kind of dumb. I smirked and reached backward to pat her head.

"Thanks, Licorice."

[Bat... Now isn't the time to flirt.]

[Birdbrain, this is the best time.]

"Of course, I trust Lotte, too."

As I reached out with my other hand and patted Lotte, I thought about Ellos. Ellos who had lost Baruella, Hazen who had never considered Ellos' feelings, and myself who somewhat understood it but still couldn't forgive him.

Right, for example, just as an example, suppose Hwaya died. If I could involve my friend and get my revenge, would I have done what he did? What if Ludia died? What if it was Ye-Eun or Daisy? What if it was Father, Mother, Ren, Leon, Sumire, Lotte, or Licorice?

What if Yua and Ina died?

After thinking about it that far, I raised my head.

“I see.”

They were all who I had to protect. I couldn't sacrifice any one of them to avenge someone else. Not even Walker.

Some of them might be more important to me than others. After all, I was only human. I couldn't possibly say I thought of everyone equally. Still, taking revenge by sacrificing their lives, that was something I couldn't do.

In the end, that's what it was.

I wasn't someone who Ellos had to protect.

“What... What did I think about Ellos?”

Were we even friends?

We met for the first time on the dungeon's 5th floor. He was kind, and even after his party moved on and I had no other choice but to remain on the 5th floor, he continued to contact me and encourage me. When we met the second time, I positions had swapped. Still, the way we treated each other hadn't changed. We respected each other and hoped we could both protect our worlds.

Now I thought about it, that was it.

We didn't share any special bond, nor did we spend enough time to trust each other unconditionally. Not only that, I was suspicious and wary of him.

That was all there was between us.

"Dear Husband, you can't protect everyone you come to know. It's even harder to connect with them emotionally."

"Yeah, I know... Even though I know that..."

Now that my anger had subsided, all that remained was emptiness. I felt empty like I didn't want to do anything. I wanted to throw this world away and just return to Earth.

But I couldn't do that. Just because Ellos threw away this world, I couldn't do the same. I couldn't make everyone struggling to survive in this continent despair because of two irresponsible Heroes.

“They need hope, too. They also need a new Hero.”

“Yeah.”

I looked up and scanned our surroundings. Right, I couldn't stay down forever. I was going to give them hope. A new hope.

Instead of a Hero who died and a Hero who abandoned himself and his world, I had to make a new Hero with the heart to protect his continent. It might take some time, but it should be possible. I hoped so. If I couldn't find someone like that, that would be the end for this continent. After all, this continent still had an absurdly long road ahead.

I thought of what Hazen said. I recalled his hate-filled face, as he said he would need to infinitely fight with other worlds to survive.

It was easy to regard everything as a lie and forget. That was better for my heart, too.

But, if he was right...

If it didn't end...

If, even after defeating the Demon Lord and all monsters, a pathway to another world opened and enemies poured in...

I clenched my fists.

“Licorice, let’s survive until the end.”

“Un.”

“Until the end. The end of the end.”

“Un.”

“No matter what...”

I could see the empire’s palace. Now, it was time to go see the new Hero candidate.

Chapter 277. Third Season (2)

To be honest, I didn't want to stay in the Edias continent any longer. I wanted to finish what I needed to and quickly go back.

I told Paul that the Hero had lost his power and transferred the world's power to Ellos. If I announced it publicly, it would only have served lowered their morale. It was best to not tell anyone, but I felt like I needed to tell Paul.

“So it really was like that...”

After listening to what happened, Paul wore an uncharacteristic solemn expression. I held him by his collar and shook him.

“It really was like that? Did you know something!?”

“No, no! Just that... Ever since Ellos lost Baruella, he's done many things without telling me. He lost his usual laughter, and he got stronger even though he didn't enter the dungeon... I also couldn't talk to him like I could before. That was it!”

Indeed, it was hard to suspect someone just because of that, especially if that person was someone he was close to. I accepted Paul's explanation and let him go. After letting out a dry cough, I continued.

“In any case, I have your world's power right now.”

“Ah...”

Paul made a nervous expression. If I were in his position, I would have immediately thrown me in the prison until I spat out the world's power. That was how important the world's power was. The only reason Paul wasn't doing anything was that no one was strong enough to restrain me.

Eventually, he opened his mouth carefully.

“Hey, Kang Shin.”

“We need to pick a new Hero from your continent. I'll transfer the power to him.”

“Ah.”

He looked openly relieved. Then, he suddenly paled. I didn't know who put him in the position of a crown prince, but that person must have wished for the empire's doom.

“A new Hero? But who?”

“Ah, I already decided, so you don't need to worry about it.”

“You've already decided? But Ellos and I are the only ones you know from this continent!”

“Yeah, I also don’t want to make someone I don’t know into the Hero. That’s why I picked someone I knew.”

“... Eh?”

Paul tilted his head. He blinked his eyes a few times, then widened his eyes and shouted.

“M-Me!?”

“Yep!”

“You want me to become the Hero? Hell no!”

“Don’t worry. You might not know this, but you don’t have the right to refuse.”

I grinned at Paul who was frantically shaking his head.

“It takes a long time to transfer a Hero’s power. That means I’ll need to take that person to Earth, and I absolutely refuse to bring someone I don’t know to Earth.”

“I refuse! I don’t want to, I can’t.”

“Then you want me to go back to Earth with this power?”

“There’s this excellent knight! I’ll recommend her in my place!”

“Just get packing.”

“But she’s an absolutely beautiful female knight!”

“I don’t care. Go pack.”

Paul seemed to be going insane. He muttered more nonsense before he dropped his head and spoke.

“I can’t. I’m too weak.”

“I agree, you’re weak, but humans aren’t strong from the start.”

I grabbed his shoulders and spoke seriously.

“There’s something I’ve prepared for you.”

“You? For me?”

“Yeah.”

I announced with a solemn expression.

“I call it the thrashing phase.”

With that, I dragged Paul back to Earth. The Edias continent's people protested, so I cleaned up the invaders for a day with Lotte and Licorice while I waited for Paul to get ready.

Even though the density had decreased, Edias continent's atmospheric mana was still on my side. Using it, I annihilated many invaders.

“With this, you won't have to worry about anything for a while. Their leader is also dead, and I should have killed at least a tenth of their overall number.”

“Are you saying you annihilated 10% of them in a single day?”

“No, of course not. The 10% is including the ones I killed on the way to Peruta Mountain Range.”

Paul opened his mouth with a dumbfounded expression.

“You're not human.”

“I've been thinking that recently, too.”

In any case, after I returned to Earth with Paul, I visited Eleine to report what happened. I didn't go to Fairy Garden and went directly to the Lost Valley guild area. Eleine had told me how to get there last time we talked.

When she found out that the Hero was already dead when I got there, she couldn't hide her shock.

“They're even more skilled with magical tools than me? I thought for sure that he was still alive...”

“They had a way of tricking the dungeon's system, so that much should have been nothing.”

“Haa, Tian...”

Eleine dropped her head and quietly murmured what seemed to be the Hero's name. Was that enough? She soon raised her head and continued.

“In any case, you completed the mission perfectly. I'll make sure to give you the MVP reward.”

“But I couldn't save him.”

“But you tried. You did everything you could for Edias continent. I'm sure Tian would be thankful to you, too.”

When I became lost for words and just stood there silently, Eleine chuckled and put her hand on my head.

“You're a good Hero. It reminds me of the time when I was a

Hero.”

“... Thank you for the compliment.”

“But you’re not good enough as a man. I want to see Lin right now.”

“Sorry, but I don’t find that regretful.”

She frowned at my response and took out a small bead from her pocket. It had strange runes scribbled on it and was radiating a mystical glow.

“What’s this?”

“Mm, that’s a bit hard to answer. Right, I’ll tell you how it was created. When I transferred the world’s power to my continent’s successor Hero, I used the tiny bit of world’s power remaining in my body to make it. It’s a magical tool.”

“Won’t you get in trouble if someone found out?”

“No one did, so it’s okay. So what this does is...”

She confessed her crime nonchalantly and continued.

“It forcefully raises the power of an object to its next level. I don’t

know how to explain it. Not even Lord could name this item.”

“It’s an enhancement stone.”

“Enhancement stone?”

“No, nevermind.”

I took the bead from her and appraised it. As expected, it was full of question marks just like when I first appraised Radiance. I was surprised that Eleine was such an amazing magic artificer. Even if it was made using the world’s power, making an item that surpassed Sherafina’s ability... I saw her in a different light now.

“Huhu, you’re grateful, right?”

“Yeah, thanks. It looks like it was worth risking my life.”

I wasn’t being sarcastic. It was a reward that surpassed my imagination. As I received the enhancement stone, all kinds of thoughts ran through my head. Could I use this on myself? If I couldn’t, where do I use it? Chaotic Spear? Pure Black Desire? How was I supposed to activate it?

When I realized I couldn’t use it on my body, it was decided. I had to use it on Pure Black Desire. Chaotic Spear could still evolve on its own, but this was the only way for Pure Black Desire to evolve.

“Then that’s it for the reward. Bye-bye. I want to hurry up and meet Lin.”

“Ah, let me go, too. I have to ask Lin something.”

At that moment. Eleine’s scowled like a frog that ate a stinkbug.

“Oh? Eleine was hiding something like that?”

Lin grinned and stared at Eleine.

“I didn’t think you’d do something like that.”

“I didn’t keep a portion on purpose. I wasn’t good at controlling the power at the time.”

“Well, it turned out to be a good thing for this kid. So, you said you wanted to enhance Pure Black Desire with that thing?”

“Yes.”

I gave him both the enhancement stone and Pure Black Desire. He took the enhancement stone and examined it for a bit. Then, he shook his head.

“I don’t think this is something you can just use.”

“Do I need to do something special to get it to work?”

“Something like that.”

I stared at Lin blankly. Then, I glared at Eleine. She shook her hands immediately.

“W-What? No! I didn’t put in any strange conditions!”

“What Eleine made is certainly a magical tool that enhances, no, evolves, objects. But it can’t be used on anything. It looks like it has several complicated conditions. I can only see through a couple of them. First, the object you’re using it on has to have an appropriate league. Your Pure Black Desire barely passes it.”

“What’s the second?”

“The second one is a bit iffy. It’s kind of like your Chaotic Spear, but a little different. Pure Black Desire needs to go through many battles and build a record of blocking all sorts of attacks. As they say, objects have memories too. This magical tool raises the league of an object by using the object’s battle experience with its owner.

“It sounds complicated, but in the end, it’s all about EXP.”

“Mm?”

“Just something from Earth.”

I received Pure Black Desire and the magical tool.

“I made a slight modification to Pure Black Desire. When it’s time, it’ll glow. You just have to smash Pure Black Desire with the magical tool. Smash it hard, like you want to break it.”

“Oh, as expected of Lin.”

“Yeah, I’m pretty amazing. Anyways, good job on your Dimensional Mercenary mission. Hurry up and bring that gun-user to me. Ah, it was good seeing you too, Eleine.”

He chased me away naturally and did the same to Eleine. Eleine frowned and shouted.

“Argh, I came to see Lin! I need Lin to console me!”

“Loka is still pregnant. Even I wouldn’t do it with another woman at this time.”

“But I’ll die if Lin’s not here!”

“...”

For a moment, Lin made an extremely tired face and puffed out

smoke.

“Then you can stay for tea. I’m saying this beforehand, don’t expect me to put a hand on you.”

“Un!”

“That means you can’t touch me either.”

“... Un?”

“Otherwise, you can go.”

“No, I’m kidding! I’m kidding!”

Did she like Lin that much? I made a wry smile and quietly left. I suddenly wanted to see Loretta, but now wasn’t the time. I had to something to give to someone as quickly as possible.

“Hungry.”

When I went back to Marianne’s Garden, Daisy was sprawled on the kitchen table as always. I made a wry smile and asked.

“When did you break through the 16th floor?”

“Two hours... ago. I haven’t, eaten anything, during that time.

I'm, starving."

"Wait a bit, I'll make you something. And here."

I took out the dragon bracelet Lin made with Radiance and handed it to her. When she received it, she looked at my own wrist fixedly. I added with a bitter smile.

"I fully absorbed mine. You'll probably absorb it too."

"Absorb...? Tsk."

Daisy made an inexplicable sound and immediately equipped her bracelet. She did it so quickly that I didn't even have the time to warn her.

The change was immediate. Daisy fell from her chair and rolled around on the ground without a word. It would've been better if she said something, as the complete silence was frightening.

Seeing Daisy roll around the ground so energetically, I thought about tying her to a mop. Suddenly, Daisy shot up. She seemed to be doing her best to maintain a calm expression, but she was clearly teary. It seemed it hurt a lot.

"You tricked me."

"You put it on before I could say anything."

“Kang Shin, bad.”

“Yeah, yeah, my bad.”

“Punishment, make me, delicious food.”

“If it’s ramen, sure.”

I spoke with a grin, and Daisy quickly nodded.

“From now on, Kang Shin is, forever my ramen chef.”

“... Forever?”

“Forever.”

In any case, it seemed Paul’s thrashing phase would need to wait a while.

Chapter 278. Third Season (3)

As Paul might need to spend a long time on Earth, I first brought him to our guild house in Seoul's Jongno district. Ludia and Shuna immediately recognized Paul, but other than them, no one knew him. As most of Revival's members happened to be present, Paul introduced himself before he entered the thrashing phase.

"I'm Paul Von Cravis. It's nice to meet you all."

Paul bowed politely without a single shred of a crown prince's dignity. Afterwards, he raised his head, scanned Revival's members, and let out a startled shout.

"They're amazing, Kang Shin!"

"Oh, you can see through their power? You're not bad, Paul."

Paul seemed excited, as he breathed out with his nose.

"They're all amazing beauties!"

I increased the thrashing phase duration by two months in my heart and introduced Paul to Revival's members.

"Paul is Edias continent's successor Hero. His continent's Hero died without officially transferring his power. I happened to retrieve that power, and he'll be here until I transfer the Hero's

power to him. As you might expect, he won't be an official member of Revival."

"I was wondering if we were finally going to get another male member."

"It's not easy to transfer a Hero's power. It'll take few months at the very least. Since I have to run around clearing Event Dungeons and monsters, it might even take a year or more."

"So we'll be seeing each other for a long time. Nice to meet you."

"Oh, ooh! Nice to meet you!"

Hwaya, who was the most social one out of all of us, greeted Paul first. Paul then immediately greeted her back. Hwaya snickered. It was obvious what she was thinking about, but I had to give her credit for not saying it out loud.

"Successor Hero... Hmm, it's nice to meet you. It hasn't been long since I heard about Heroes from my son, but it's interesting how so many Heroes are gathering here."

"Well, isn't it simple? If Earth falls to ruin, it'll take a few more worlds with it. So get stronger, Hero's father."

"Hohoho. Walker, have you heard of thrashing phase?"

Everyone in Revival knew what a Hero was and what happened if he died. I had already told them about it. Since I was the strongest person on Earth, they were surprised but they weren't scared. Regardless of who the Hero was, many of them already thought it would be hopeless without me. Nothing had changed for them. The fact that I couldn't deny this way of thinking saddened me.

However, I didn't tell them about Ellos. I didn't want to upset them either. Not to mention, a few of them were sure to stick to me, worried about whether I was hurt.

I was thankful for their concern, but rather than spoiling myself, I wanted to overcome it with my own strength.

“What about Kasi... No, nevermind. Nice to meet you, Paul.”

Ludia was most likely misunderstanding what happened, but she seemed to have figured out what happened to Ellos since Paul was here instead of him. She swallowed her words and bowed politely. She could be considerate to others. I was quite proud of her growth.

Paul also seemed to have realized what Ludia wanted to ask, as he pretended to be calm and greeted her back.

“Yeah, Palludia. You got even prettier. You're a stunning beauty, really.”

“But I didn't get pretty for you. It was for Shin.”

“Mm, yeah...”

No, I was wrong. She was still savage. I made a bitter smile and turned away. I had to tell Ren something before he left for the dungeon.

“Ren, I have a good news for you. I’m sure you’ll be happy.”

I smiled at Ren sweetly. Ren let out dry coughs and took a couple of steps back.

“I don’t really want to hear it, I think.”

“It’s fine even if you don’t. You’ll experience it with your body soon.”

“So it really was about thrashing phase!?”

“Be happy, it’s the third season of thrashing phase!”

Looking at Ren’s somber expression, Paul seemed to be frightened too. Interestingly, Father was nodding his head in satisfaction.

“I’m glad you’re back safely.”

Hwaya spoke to me as she gave the rowdy men a look of ridicule. I nodded at her and asked her through the messaging system.

[What happened with Ciara?]

[She's fine. She's controlling mana by herself right now. She'll be fine on her own in about two days.]

What Hwaya had done was truly praiseworthy. I gave Hwaya a thumbs up, and she responded with a victory sign. Ye-Eun noticed us and pouted.

“You guys talked secretly again.”

“It was about Ciara. I explained last time, right?”

When I said Ciara's name, everyone became quiet. They were divided into two groups – one that hated Ciara because they were present when we first met Ciara and the ones that stayed quiet because they hadn't met Ciara or didn't know much about her. Thinking about it now, because I left for the Dimensional Mercenary mission immediately after I brought her, I hadn't given them a proper explanation.

In that case, this was a good chance. Since it wasn't common for Revival's members to all be present, it was probably best to use this opportunity to explain myself. With a bitter smile, I told them about what situation Ciara was in and why I accepted her into Revival. Most of them were shocked to find out that Ciara had Evil

Eyes, and some showed slight dislike at the idea of making her our ally.

However, the general response was...

“I don’t like her as a person, but we certainly need her ability...”

That.

“Won’t she do something stupid?”

“I decided to put a succubus on her as a lookout. As you might know, she has absolutely no war potential. Even if something happens, we’ll be able to restrain her, so don’t worry.”

“Son, did you cure that girl?”

“It was partly thanks to an Elixir, but yes, it wouldn’t have been possible without my power.”

Father seemed to be thinking about something and soon nodded.

“I don’t think we’ll have to worry about her that much. I’m sure you know this, but she’s still young. I think it was wrong of her to hide the information about the raid at the Antelope Canyon, but the environment she grew up in was too isolated. We have to think about that.”

“Yes, father.”

“Plus, children are quick to change, especially when they’re in love. As she grows up, Shin will influence her a lot, so we won’t need to worry about her too much.”

“Father, that’s what I’m worried about the most...”

Father snickered.

“I wonder. You gave back that child’s eyes and voice, which even with her amazing power, she couldn’t do anything about. I’m sure it was more than enough to blow away every value she held. I think she’ll have at least one of love or worship for you. What do you think? Which one do you prefer?”

“... I’d rather take love.”

When I imagined Ciara creating something like Cult of Kang Shin and acting like its saintess, my face paled. It seemed I wasn’t the only one who imagined this, as some of the others also wore the same face. At that moment, Daisy suddenly asked.

“... Then, are you reproducing, with her?”

“What!?”

“Daisy, you’re banned from using that word from now.”

“... Then, copulating?”

“That’s banned too!”

I smacked her hand before she could say anything worse.

“Alright, that’s it! Everyone disperse! Ren and Paul, you two follow me to the underground training room!”

Thrashing phase. It helped to make a new person.

Thrashing phase. It thrashed a person’s old self away.

Thrashing phase. It transformed someone into something inhumane.

“Save me...!”

“You won’t die.”

I ignored Paul’s plea and smacked his back. Then, I kicked Ren, who was pretending to be dead.

“Ren, you won’t get stronger by lying dead on the ground!”

“Kuhuk! Crown Prince...! Just what happened? How can you return as an even bigger monster!?”

“You can do it too, Ren!”

“Don’t lie!”

Along with a hearty shout, Ren charged at me once more. It seemed he was mad about being kicked. Perfect, that was the response I wanted!

“But even if you’re angry, you can’t make such an easy-to-read attack!”

“Aaagggh!”

When I heard Ren’s cry, it felt like ten-years worth of annoyance within me disappeared. Of course, I didn’t say this out loud.

“And you, Paul! You kept being beaten up! Aren’t you mad!? Be more aggressive!”

“How am I supposed to be aggressive when I can’t hit you anyways!? Let me go, I don’t want to be a Hero!”

“You don’t want to be a Hero? Even if Edias continent loses its hope!?”

“Ku... Kuuuuu!”

At my words of encouragement, Paul finally picked himself up.

Good, I didn’t make the wrong choice. Paul was an idiot, but he was more responsible than an average person. Although Heroes had to be strong, it was just as important to have a sense of responsibility. To prevent what happened with Ellos from ever happening again, Edias continent’s new Hero had to be someone like Paul.

Of course, responsibility alone didn’t solve anything. That was why Paul was going through a thrashing phase.

“This is hard. I think you don’t have the talent for battle.”

“You’re so blunt!”

After beating Paul up for three hours, I realized that he had no talent for battle. His talent was only about one-nineteenth of Ren’s.

“You know, the most important thing for a Hero is to not die.”

As such, I decided to narrow my focus.

“Not dying... Right.”

Paul nodded.

“Plus, you’re a crown prince. You won’t need to stand on the front line, right?”

“But our Hero always stood on the front line.”

“That’s because he was a capable warrior that could utilize the world’s power in battle. That’s not you.”

“Why do you keep scratching my pride!?”

“Thankfully, you have a bit of talent at defending.”

For several years, he climbed the dungeon as a tank. No matter how talentless he was, if he held the shield while climbing 50 floors of the First Dungeon, defensive maneuvers should at least be somewhat ingrained in his body. I personally thought he was more suited to defending than attacking too.

“But I couldn’t properly grab monsters’ attention and always put Ellos in danger.”

“You have to live. Why would you need to grab aggro? Don’t. Just stay quiet like you’re dead.”

“I’m so pitiful, I’m crying.”

“Paul.”

I pulled back the wooden spear I was hitting him with. Paul groaned and raised his head.

“What?”

“You really don’t want to be a Hero?”

“...”

“To be honest, it’s more convenient for me to transfer the Hero’s power to a random person. This might sound harsh, but I really have nothing to do with Edias continent. In fact, someone I considered to be a friend betrayed me and I had to go through unnecessary hardship. You should be thankful that I’m even handing over the world’s power. Now, with that said, let me ask again. Do you really not want to be a Hero?”

“... No.”

He shook his head.

“The Hero we believed would continue to live and lead us died. The friend I trusted the most abandoned our continent when his fiancée died. ... Now, there isn’t anyone for me to trust but myself.”

“Do you want to protect your continent?”

I asked, and he replied as he gritted his teeth.

“I do. I’ve been hearing it nonstop ever since I became the crown prince, and I really do want to protect my empire and humanity.”

“Let me ask you then. Don’t you think having to hide is pitiful when it’s to protect your continent?”

He raised his head. He stared into my eyes, then smacked his own face. He really struck hard. He groaned and spat out a tooth with blood leaking from his mouth.

“... Sorry for acting spoiled. Help me. Help me so that I can survive no matter who or what I’m facing.”

“First, let’s put your tooth back in.”

With holy power, putting a tooth back in was a piece of cake. However, Paul shook his head.

“It’s fine even if I’m missing a tooth... But let me hold on to it. Whenever I’m thinking like I am today, I’ll take it out and fix my attitude.”

“Good, now you have the face of a warrior.”

I grinned and held the wooden spear up again.

“Ren, rest for 30 minutes. I’m going to teach Paul basics of defense.”

“If you don’t want to kill him, tone it down a bit!”

I ignored Ren and charged at Paul. Paul gritted his teeth and held up his shield, but it was impossible for him to block my attack. At least, not yet.

“After we’re done, you won’t even sweat when you’re blocking an attack of this level! Prepare yourself!”

“Kuaaaa!”

Paul howled. Then, he held up his shield again and fixed his stance. He was determined and motivated. He now had the mindset of a warrior. Inspired by his determination, I spoke as I pointed my wooden spear at him.

“I’m also training in something right now, so be careful not to get hit by it and die.”

“... What?!”

Two voices simultaneously rang out. Ren, who was resting on his butt, moved away slowly.

“Crown Prince, I forgot to tell you something. I promised the kids that I’d make dinner...”

“Elfa has been learning how to cook lately. I already messaged her, so you won’t have to worry about making them dinner. Happy, right?”

“Ha, haha... I’m very... happy...”

Ren dropped his head. Paul’s face told me that he was seriously contemplating dropping his shield and running away. Of course, there was no way I would let that happen.

Third season. It seemed like it would be an enjoyable thrashing phase.

Chapter 279. Third Season (4)

Training Ren and Paul was important, but Revival's other members were just as important. Some of them were slowing down in their dungeon climbing speed, and they also needed something to prepare for if they lost the dungeon's power.

After thinking about it for a long time, I came to a decision. I was going to teach them Peruta Circuit.

“Peruta Circuit... The mana whirlpool that you use? That thing!?”

“You already have a mana cultivation method, so I guess you might not need it, Lebuik.”

“No, I want to learn it! Let me learn it!”

“It's fine. Just focus on the one you already have.”

I shouldn't say this as someone who mastered Peruta Circuit at only 22 years old, but it took a long time to learn Peruta Circuit. Without Peruta's continuous instructions and, though I'm a bit embarrassed to say this, my talent, I would have needed twice or thrice the time I spent.

For those with already excellent mana breathing technique and mana cultivation method, learning Peruta Circuit might do more harm than good. Good examples were Ludia, who used to be a

princess of an empire, Daisy, who didn't need to learn anything, and Ren and Paul, whom, as crown princes, must have gotten the best training from a young age.

“So here is the list of people who will be learning Peruta Circuit from me.”

Hwaya Eleni Mastiford, Kang Yungoong, Shuna Aren Lihita, Illina Alexandrovna Mikhalova, Kang Yua, Minami Violet Sumire, Edward Walker, Sophie Brightman, Laz Michel, Ilayda Van, and Ciara Kenex.

When Ye-Eun saw the list, she spoke dejectedly.

“Hiing, I'm not here.”

“You're already learning one from Duca.”

“But there are seven competitors here. I can't be the only one excluded...”

“Wait, seven? Tell me who they are now. You just included two people that you shouldn't have!”

“Owwwwww!”

When I was punishing Ye-Eun, someone else raised his hand. It was Leon, who had confused face.

“Friend, can I not learn that thing? Or is there a special reason I’m excluded?”

“Yeah, Leon. You’ll be learning from someone other than me.”

I made a mischievous smile.

“There’s a sunbae who’s perfect for you.”

“There’s someone like that!? Why didn’t you tell me earlier!? Hahaha!”

“Because you needed to be a First Dungeon explorer to meet him.”

“Ah, I see! Now that you mention it, I only became one last week!”

In truth, he was already extremely quick. Him being a Gold rank explorer of the First Dungeon meant that he had broken through 80 floors of the Second Dungeon. I made a bitter smile and asked Leon to wait. Father also asked me.

“Didn’t you say you couldn’t teach it to other people?”

“I did, but not now. I mastered it enough to teach other people. That’s why I’m willing to teach it.”

“That’s great, but I won’t need to learn it. I’ll break through my limits on my own.”

“I thought you’d say that, Father.”

I took out Father’s name from the list without regret. Suddenly, there were only two guys left. When I glanced at Michel just to be sure, he smiled.

“I’ll gladly accept your teaching. If I’m not doing well, please punish me accordingly.”

“Don’t worry about it too much, Michel.”

Michel probably said that half as a joke, as he flinched at my serious response. I didn’t go easy just because the person I was teaching was older than me. It was entirely possible that more people would join Ren and Paul’s thrashing phase.

“Will it be okay, Shin-nim? You’re already so busy.”

Sumire knew that I didn’t yet master the technique I displayed in front of her. Her reaction was completely justified. Still, I replied confidently as I stroked her head.

“It’s fine. As you know, I improved while teaching you. I’m sure there will be something I can learn while teaching Peruta Circuit to

others.”

Plus, when the demon race conquered Oceania, I realized I couldn't be the only one progressing. When I first made Revival, what I had in mind was an elite group that could overwhelm any foe. Now was the time to make everyone stronger.

“I'll need to engrave Peruta Circuit's mana path. I'll do that individually. I can't give everyone one-on-one lessons, but I'll check up periodically and give advice. I'll do my best so that everyone can one-day master Peruta Circuit.”

“Thank god I'm not on the list...!”

“Even thinking about it gives me chills. Crown Prince doing his best...!”

Ren and Paul hugged each other and trembled. I snorted and vowed to do my best for them too.

After safely telling everyone my plan and getting their agreements, I set up appointments with each of the ten people who would learn Peruta Circuit. Then, I took Leon to Fairy Garden.

[Prince-nim is here!]

[It's Prince-nim!]

[Ah, he brought someone else.]

[I haven't seen him before!]

“Ooooh! This place is amazing! How beautiful!”

As soon as we arrived at Fairy Garden, nearby elementals greeted us. Although Leon couldn't see them, he could detect the magical light they were emitting. Seeing the assortment of colors produced by the elementals, Leon exclaimed in awe. To me, he looked like an old man from the countryside who came to Seoul for the first time.

“Friend, if there was a place this beautiful, you should have brought me earlier!”

“It's not a place anyone can get into. I had to get permission from you too.”

“I'm touched! I'm really touched! I haven't felt this way since I first felt mana!”

“You use too many exclamation marks! Anyways, follow me.”

Leon couldn't take his eyes off the elementals, so I had to drag him to Lin's workshop. When we neared it, we could hear a noisy hammering noise.

“Oh? He's working today too?”

For someone like Lin who hated work, he was working recently to a worrying degree. I tilted my head and kicked open the door to the workshop. Lin shouted as if he knew we were coming. He still had a hammer in his hand.

“Argh, just wait a bit!”

Lin was striking a small cylindrical metal. I immediately knew what it was.

“Lin, are you making a gun for Leon?”

I didn’t even ask him to. He was doing it out of his own will! Lin began hammering again as he gave us a glance.

“Is that him?”

“Hey, dude! Nice to meet you, I’m Leon Pepper! That’s a handsome horn you got there!”

“You sure use a lot of exclamation marks. Wait a moment. Let me finish this real quick.”

Lin seemed to have liked Leon’s compliment, as he grinned and went back to work. Meanwhile, Leon looked around the workshop and continually let out awe-struck remarks. If I could live like Leon, my life would be filled with happiness. I stared at him

absentmindedly as I thought about something.

“Hu... Okay.”

Did Lin get a satisfying result? He picked up the cylindrical metal brimming with magic power and nodded approvingly. Then, he turned his head towards us.

“Leon Pepper, was it?”

“Yes. What should I call you?”

“Lin.”

“Lin! That’s a cool name!”

Lin grinned and took out a cigarette before giving Leon an offering gesture. Leon nodded immediately, then received the cigarette Lin threw at him.

“I don’t usually give my cigarettes out to other people. Consider it an honor.”

“Hahaha, I’ll remember it!”

When Leon tried to take out a lighter, Lin smirked and lit the cigarette in his mouth without moving a finger. When Leon saw it,

he also put his cigarette in his mouth, and as expected, it lit up. Leon widened his eyes and murmured with the cigarette in his mouth.

“What an enviable ability...”

“This is the first time you said something without an exclamation mark, and it’s about lighting a cigar?”

“Unlike you, Kang Shin, he knows what’s good. Oi, let me see.”

He reached out to Leon. Leon tilted his head and grabbed Lin’s hand. Lin then placed his index finger and middle finger on the back of his hand and closed his eyes. Question marks rose up on Leon’s face?

“... He was right. You really are like me.”

After a while, Lin murmured quietly as he opened his eyes. His expression carried an interest that didn’t exist before.

“Just what kind of a place is Earth? It has someone like Kang Shin, and now someone who has a similar ability to me. Interesting, it’s really interesting.”

“So how is it?”

Lin seemed to be hesitating about something. When Leon

grinned, Lin shrugged.

“Good. I can use him to ignore the women bothering me.”

“That’s not a very pleasing reason.”

“What floor are you on?”

Leon replied immediately.

“I’ve only been in the First Dungeon for a week! I’m on the 54th floor now!”

“You advanced from the Second Dungeon? If you climbed three floors in a week, you aren’t all that bad... Good. Do you want to learn from me?”

“I’m always welcome to learn, Friend! Learning is what makes someone human!”

“How am I your friend? Well, it’s fine. Ah, I haven’t told you what I’ll be teaching.”

Lin let out a last puff of smoke from the cigarette in his mouth, then threw the cigarette into the air. He then took out a small handgun and shot it.

A huge explosion bloomed.

“We’re in Fairy Garden, Lin!”

“Don’t worry. I built it sturdy.”

Lin retorted lazily and put away his handgun, but I felt like I could see an enraged Loretta running over. Leon, on the other hand, was riled up.

“Your ability really is similar to mine! No, it’s even more amazing than mine!”

“Hmph, so you’re at least good enough to see that. Let me cut to the chase. I hate people without talent and people without work ethic. I’m teaching you since Kang Shin recommended you, but if I don’t like you, you’re out. If you’re okay with that, I’ll lend you my help.”

He stared at Leon.

“You want to give it a go?”

Leon faced him directly and smiled. His face full of confidence never felt so reliable.

“Take good care of me, Friend! We’ll be seeing each other for a long time!”

Leon and Lin seemed to have something going for them. Was it because they were both smokers? I tilted my head, but if their personalities matched, that's all that mattered. I nodded approvingly and spoke to Lin.

“Lin, there's something else I want to request from you.”

Lin put on a dumbfounded look.

“Do I owe you something? How can you make a request so confidently?”

“My accessories are all broken. Please, Lin. You're the only person, no, draconian, I can trust!”

“That's because I'm the only draconian you know... W-What's this!? None of them are even remotely intact!”

Even as he complained repeatedly, Lin accepted the accessories. Then, after examining them one by one, he screamed. He truly was a master craftsman!

“Really!? I shouldn't have agreed to help this guy... Kuk, come back in a week!”

“Thanks, Lin!”

“Go away!”

Lin really was kind! I gave him a thumbs up while Leon snickered from the side with widened eyes.

Just like that, I successfully connected Lin and Leon.

Chapter 280. Third Season (5)

I left Leon to Lin and left Lin's workshop. Considering their personalities, it seemed I didn't need to worry about them. Since I left my accessories with Lin, I'll check on Leon when I come back in a week to collect them.

With that taken care of, I now had time to work on personal business. Of course, to me, personal business only meant one thing.

It was to finally break through Beyond's 30th floor.

The First Dungeon's 55th Floor Master was the Twin-headed Ogre and the 60th Floor Master was the Superior Doppelganger. Just what did they have in common!? I was slightly worried about what kind of a monster would pop out, but when I entered Beyond, I was met with a strange scene.

"There's no one here...?"

I looked around. It was undoubtedly the battle room. The environment had transformed into a dense forest, but it was eerily quiet without a single chirp of a bird. Most importantly, the Floor Master wasn't here.

"What is it now?"

I stood still and fell in thought. One thing I was sure of was that

this was the Floor Master battle room and that there was a Floor Master on every Floor Master battle room. In that case, I didn't need to think too much about it. I held up my spear and shouted as I struck down on the ground.

“Gaia Buster!”

I can't tell what's going on, so I'll just destroy everything! Immediately, the ground began to quake, and the forest's trees, rocks, and plants began to be uprooted. The world seemed to be crumbling down. Meanwhile, there was something flying towards me.

[Critical Hit!]

“So that's what it was.”

Everything I broke was in my control. Before I could even confirm the identity of the flying object, pieces of rocks clashed against it and sent it flying a different direction. That was only the start. Now that a target had been acquired, pieces of land carrying black lightning began to all hurl towards it. It was a complete bombardment! The flying object changed continuously changed directions in a seemingly desperate attempt to dodge the incoming barrage.

Eventually, the object manifested in the form of a giant beast.

[Guooooooooo— Kak!]

In the middle of roaring furiously, it screamed. The entirety of Gaia Buster's firepower was targeting it. There was no way it could be safe after making its body bigger. In the end, the beast shrunk in size and continued to flee.

‘Is that a doppelganger skill...?’

Considering how it was freely changing its form, I seemed to have the correct assumption. If that was the only skill it had, it would only be a Superior Doppelganger. It surely had something inherited from the Twin-headed Ogre. Could it be incredibly strong, and I just didn't know about it because I was never hit?

If I wanted to confirm my suspicion, I could let it hit me, but there was no reason to seek out an unnecessary pain. I would end it with this Gaia Buster!

[Critical Hit!]

“Kuk!”

In the next moment, however, I was flying in the sky. I couldn't comprehend what just happened. Wasn't I watching that monster get pummeled by Gaia Buster!?

If anything, I was able to confirm my suspicion. It really did have a powerful punch. I felt like I lost a tenth of my HP. Considering Pure Black Desire's defensive power and how my HP surpassed

250,000 points, it was terrifying even if it was a critical hit.

“Ku...! Peika, Ruyue, Sharana!”

[Call me earlier!]

[Yay!]

[Master, what are your commands!?!]

I regretted not having my elementals out earlier and quickly infused them inside me. At the same time, I thought back to what just happened. Then, I immediately found out.

[Guaaaaa!]

“There wasn’t just one.”

A Twin-headed Ogre had two heads. However, these guys even had two bodies! One had already revealed itself to draw my attention and lower my guard. Meanwhile, the other had sneaked an attack. Though it was a simple plan, it was effective.

[Be careful, our defense might not hold!]

“I know. Let’s not get hit from now.”

I released Lightning God's power and held up my spear. Gaia Buster had also run out of steam. The pieces of land that were following my will to attack the enemy were now falling down, and the two enemies disappeared like they were never here. If they could hide from me, their concealment ability was worthy of praise.

“These guys have a transformation ability, but they're not doppelgangers or ogres. They're just something in between.”

Two bosses with strength and stealth. I took a deep breath and roused Peruta Circuit to its limit. A whirlpool of mana rose up and even the fallen debris reacted. In the end, the two bosses had to attack me. I just had to notice them and attack first!

Skills that needed time to prepare weren't any good right now. What I needed was chaos flames strengthened by Sharana's power.

Black flames ignited on my spear. I grabbed it with my eyes closed and waited. I couldn't detect any presence. Still, when they attacked me, they were bound to reveal themselves.

[Master!]

“Haa!”

I didn't even need to change my stance. In the same position I was in before, I simply thrust forward with my spear. With the sound of air being cut to pieces, I felt a definite touch on my spear

tip. A scream rang out.

[Kiaaaaaaak!]

“Ruyue!”

[I know!]

While I attacked one, the other one was sure to attack me. Without me having to order her, Ruyue encased my armor in an extra layer of ice. An attack then struck the abdominal area of my armor and fell after being frozen. I immediately crushed it with my foot.

“Does it want a psychological battle?”

What flew at me was an ordinary fruit. Its goal was simple. It was trying to make me lower my guard by repeatedly attacking with fake attacks. It was a good strategy, especially in a situation like this where it was hard to pinpoint the enemy’s location. However, it was naïve.

“I already know where one of you is! Heroic Strike!”

I shot spear forward. Chaos Spear struck the flames burning in the air and detonated its energy. By strengthening Peika with Lightning God’s lightning, a huge blinding light exploded.

[Kyaaaaak!]

A death throe that even gave its listener chills rang out. Immediately afterward, the chaos flames disappeared from the air. As long as I didn't extinguish on my own, the only way to extinguish it was for its target to die. Someone with a highest rank curse magic or a highest rank holy magic might be able to get rid of it, but there was no way these bosses had such magic. In other words, one of them had been killed.

“Now there's one left.”

I wondered if the other one would attack when I killed its partner, but there was no attack. I quickly retrieved Chaotic Spear and took up my stance. But no matter how much I waited, nothing happened. It seemed the remaining boss monster wanted a drawn-out battle.

“But I don't want that. I want to go see Loretta, you see...”

I never thought I would need to look for Floor Masters in a Floor Master fight. Not to mention, two Floor Masters had appeared this time. It seemed I couldn't blindly trust the knowledge and experience I gained. With a bitter smile, I deactivated Spirit Aura.

“Peika, Ruyue, Sharana, probe around.”

[Will Master be okay?]

“Don’t worry. There’s only one left. I wouldn’t lose to it.”

Its attack was certainly powerful, but it only helped to raise my guard. After entrusting the three elements to search for the hiding boss, I closed my eyes and stood still. I had already gained something from this fight. Knowing one’s weakness and overcoming it was how one got stronger. Every attack I took from a monster was a valuable lesson.

With my eyes closed, I looked for a presence that didn’t belong to my elementals. I could feel the presence of the egg in my pocket, but I excluded it too. Then, the world became silent. It was normal for Floor Master battle rooms to have no life other than the Floor Master. In truth, this was the perfect place to meditate.

Enough time passed that I was starting to get sleepy. It was then that I finally caught his presence. In that instant, a chill went down my back. It had been hiding in my throat.

‘I almost died.’

When? Obviously, it was when I attacked the other one. That was the only opening I had. Still, I would have never thought it could shrink enough to fly inside my mouth unnoticed.

It was undoubtedly waiting for the moment I let go of my tension. But even my elementals couldn’t detect it, just how good was its concealment skill?

Of course, now that I'd noticed it, it was my win. No matter how capable it was at hiding itself, it couldn't possibly be better than me!

“Sky God's Play!”

What did I transform into? It was simple. I had transformed into the Lava King's lava.

[Amazing! You are the first in Beyond's history to succeed in soloing the Twin Ethuria on your first try! You obtained 3 skill point as a reward. Current skill points: 24]

[You obtained the title, 'Ethuria Master.' All stats increase by 2. This effect will apply even if the title is not equipped.]

[You cleared Beyond's 30th floor. You obtained the qualification to challenge the dungeon's 81st floor.]

[Your maximum HP and MP increase by 2%. You obtained 5 bonus stats.]

[Experience has been added to skills you frequently used to progress through Beyond's 30th floor.]

[You received the only reward left hidden for the First Explorer. Congratulations! Your luck stat increases by 10.]

When I heard the flurry of messages, I immediately transformed back. I could transform into liquid or even gas with Sky God's Play, but if even a single drop separated from my body, it was tricky to transform back. It was best to cancel the skill as soon as I achieved my goal.

"Damn, to think it went in my body."

[Sorry, Master. It's my fault...]

"No, I was just lacking."

I consoled Peika who was sullen. This time, however, I really might have died. Even though my body had gone through a transformation, I was far from invincible. I had been overconfident.

This Floor Master had entered my body using the single moment of an opening when I attacked its partner. From then, it was only waiting for me to let my guard down. It was a very Floor Master-like method, but there couldn't be a more fearful method to kill an enemy.

"Huu... Good. I obtained many things from this battle."

I slapped my cheeks to snap myself out. I was lucky that this didn't happen on Earth. I was lucky that I got through it without

making any fatal mistakes.

From now on, I wouldn't let my enemy enter my body easily. Now that I was in the position of teaching others, I couldn't let them see me make such stupid mistakes, especially if the mistake led to death.

"I shouldn't look down on the dungeon. I was tricked by how easy it had been recently."

When I imagined Sherafina snickering seeing me fight the Floor Master, I subconsciously pouted. But still, maybe I should thank her for letting me grow.

Twin Ethuria, two assassins with a powerful punch, the ability to conceal themselves perfectly, and the ability to transform into anything. I couldn't confirm what they looked like, but I told myself to remember the name.

"I'll leave my self-reflection to here. Let's look at the reward."

If possible, I wanted an item that the worlds' enemies would have a hard time nullifying. Of course, what I got wasn't an item, but a skill. That said, when I saw the words 'World Deception', I became excited. It had to be a skill related to the Ethuria's stealth and transformation!

As a skill created by the dungeon, it couldn't escape the fate of being nullified by the worlds' enemies, but I had experience

overcoming this limitation with Divine Speed. I planned on going further in this realm. If I could make my own World Deception using this skill as a basis...!

I reached out without hesitation and learned the skill. World Deception's information flowed into me.

[You learned World Deception (Active)! World Deception has two abilities. First, you can transform into monsters you've defeated and use their special attacks. Note that you cannot use attacks that are beyond your league. Second, you can perfectly conceal your presence. When the skill reaches its peak, you can also conceal the presence of others.]

“Ooooooh!”

The first ability was honestly a downgraded version of Sky God's Play. The second ability, however, was exactly what I wanted. I clenched my fists and hollered. If I used this power well, it could become a much fatal weapon than what I suffered from!

“Good, now...”

Now, I had to get some rest. I undoubtedly had difficult busy days ahead. Even if it was just for today, I wanted to relax with Loretta and rest. With that in mind, I jumped into the gate that opened up in midair.

Loretta then scolded me for coming to see her after Lin.

Chapter 281. Third Season (6)

“Shin is so mean.”

“I messaged you first though.”

“There’s a big difference between seeing Shin-nim’s face and just hearing Shin-nim’s voice! I can’t be assured that Shin-nim came back safely until I see Shin-nim and touch Shin-nim with my hands!”

Loretta fretted like a child and hit me lightly. A ‘light’ hit from Loretta was enough to massacre several hundred Orc Lords, but I endured the pain. Even if we did something couple-like, our bodies made it more extreme. I spoke as I did my best to hide my pain.

“Kkeung. I just wanted to finish everything I had to do before I came to see Loretta. That way, I won’t be distracted by other things.”

“... Until when?”

Loretta suddenly became quieter as she asked with sparkling eyes. It was extremely cute.

“All day.”

“All day!? Really?”

“Yes.”

“Yay!”

Seeing Loretta clap in happiness, I smiled awkwardly. Loretta pushed herself towards me and asked with a flushed face.

“What should we play? What should we play?”

“Playing is nice, but there’s actually something I want to learn from Loretta.”

In an instant, Loretta’s face became rotten.

“Shin-nim, is it fun inflating my expectation and bursting it in a moment?”

“It is, actual... Sorry.”

After barely consoling Loretta, I had her sit down next to me. Of course, I had to suffer through unspeakable pain before then.

“Fine, but only because I’ll be spending time with Shin-nim.”

“Right, so what I want to learn is...”

“If it’s punching people, I’m really good at that.”

Loretta smiled sweetly and threw several jabs. With even a single jab being potentially lethal, I realized Loretta was still slightly angry.

“That’s nice, but I want to learn about Dimensional Travel.”

Loretta face stiffened.

“You’re kidding, right?”

“I’m not.”

“... Hold on.”

Loretta got up and circled around the room. She then went into the kitchen and boiled red tea. After wandering around for 10 minutes without saying anything, Loretta filled her teacup and took a sip. Only then did she finally say something.

“Fine, but only because I’ll be spending time with Shin-nim.”

“You’re going that far back!?”

“I don’t know, you can’t!”

“I want to learn it.”

I looked at Loretta with a serious face. Loretta then humphed and snorted.

“No!”

“Why not?”

“The difficult of the magic is too high. Also, crossing a dimension with one’s own power rather than using the dungeon’s power takes an enormous amount of mana! It’s impossible with Shin-nim’s current strength!”

“But I still want to learn it. If I do, I’m sure it’ll be useful one day.”

Loretta wore a exhausted look and asked.

“At least tell me the reason Shin-nim wants to learn it.”

“I want to be able to use the skills the dungeon gave me on my own power.”

“Be more honest.”

“I also thought about being stuck in a foreign world where the

dungeon's power didn't work.”

“That's not... impossible, I guess.”

Loretta turned back from trying to shoot me down. She knew what I had gone through.

The balance between attack and defense was twisting in a strange way. The Demon Lord wasn't the only world's enemy trying to analyze the dungeon's power to overcome it. Unless I planned on quit being a Dimensional Mercenary, I wanted to learn how to use Dimensional Travel on my own.

“But Shin-nim, it will be really hard. It's not something you can master in just one or two days.”

“I'm prepared. I'll come learn it from Loretta even if I have to squeeze my available time dry.”

“...”

Thinking about it now, Loretta seemed to have liked what I just said. Loretta ears were perked up. She fell in thought for a moment, then finally nodded.

“Don't tell this to Lord. Only tell her after you fully master Dimensional Travel.”

“Got it.”

Loretta sighed. She then tilted her head and asked.

“Shin-nim, how did you know I could use Dimensional Travel? Even amongst dungeon administrators, I’m the only one other than Lord who can use it.”

“It’s that hard!?”

“Ah, so you were just mistaken on how hard it was.”

Loretta gave me a stare urging me to give up now, but I only grinned in return. Loretta then suddenly exclaimed in surprise.

“Shin-nim, now that I think about it, is that a proposal? It’s the same thing as ‘I’ll be with you forever,’ right?”

“I want to learn it quickly, so cut the nonsense”

Loretta’s tutoring starting just like that. In parallel with Dimensional Travel, I also practiced making other skills I learned in the dungeon mine. As long as I could protect myself from Loretta, who was eyeing my body like a predator eyeing a prey, she was the best mentor.

Ren and Paul’s thrashing phase, Revival members’ Peruta Circuit lessons, learning Dimensional Travel from Loretta, and making

Ciara into a person with Hwaya.

There were many things I had to do, but that didn't mean I could stop climbing the dungeon. I was sure that my current self wasn't strong enough to defeat the Demon Lord.

Not to mention, the Demon Lord wasn't the final boss. I had to defeat the one above the Demon Lord, and even then, I couldn't be sure that Earth would be completely safe. Even though I said I would defeat foreign worlds' enemies, invading their territory was different than them invading mine. Furthermore... No, even if I thought about that one, I couldn't do anything about it, so let's set it aside.

In any case, I headed to the dungeon. First Dungeon's 81st floor. It was the true upper part of the dungeon belonging to Platinum rank explorers.

[If Tamer is not your main class, the number of tamed beast you can take to the 81st floor is limited to one.]

When I stepped on the stairway with Licorice and Lotte, message noona... Sherafina's alert rang out in my ear. I halted my steps and glanced at Loretta who was happily waving her hand from the Floor Shop. Loretta tilted her head for a moment, and hit her left palm with her right fist like she just remembered something. Then, she stuck out her tongue.

“Ehet.”

Inexcusable. Still, since she was cute, I decided to forgive her.

“You forgot again, didn’t you?”

“Yep! It’s been a while since I dealt with a new Platinum rank explorer!”

I sighed and looked back at Licorice and Lotte.

“You two should go train by yourselves. Tell Plene to work hard too.”

“We’re both going back?”

“Yeah. Since it’s like this, I might as well try it on my own.”

Licorice seemed a bit disappointed, but Lotte simply shrugged.

“It’ll be fine if it’s Hero. Then I’ll head to Resting Place of the Angels.”

“I’ll go back to Earth.”

The two of them nodded and headed back. After sending them off, I looked back at Loretta who was still grinning happily and smacked her forehead with a light aura ball. Loretta frowned and shouted.

“Shin-nim is so mean! Give me one hundred kisses as punishment!”

“That’s a reward, so no.”

“... Eh?”

After hearing what I said, Loretta titled her head for a moment. Leaving the then blushing Loretta behind, I went up to the 81st floor. Loretta was definitely stupid.

[You entered the 81st floor. Yell ‘commence exploration’ to start exploring.]

The 81st floor carried an eerie atmosphere. It felt like ghosts would pop out of the large hallway at any time. It wasn’t just the atmosphere that was eerie. The mana in the hallway was also chillingly cold. I had to summon Ruyue to lessen its impact.

“If it’s like this from the beginning, it won’t be easy... Commence exploration!”

As soon as the words left my mouth, the hallway’s atmosphere changed and its mana pressured me with a killing intent. I poured mana into my choker and summoned Chaotic Spear. At that moment, I felt something falling on my head.

“Haa!”

I shot my spear up fiercely. However, I didn't feel my spear connecting. I jumped back and checked my spear.

There was a lump of blood stuck on my spear tip.

[The blood is moving.]

Ruyue briefly spoke. It was as she said. Blood dripping from the ceiling, blood coursing through the walls, and blood crawling on the ground. They were all aiming for me. First, the blood traveling up my spear handle was the biggest problem. I quickly swung my spear, but I couldn't shake it off.

“Is this even a monster!?”

[I can feel a powerful mana! It's similar to a elemental!]

“Ruyue, freeze it!”

[Un!]

Ruyue immediately frozen the spear handle. Surprisingly, the blood absorbed Ruyue's ice and continued to creep towards me. Mana eater, this was a mana eater! I clenched my teeth and roused Lightning God's power. Finally, a little bit of the blood evaporated. However, what I did was like peeing on a field of ice. Compared to

the amount of mana I spent, the blood only incurred a tiny loss.

“So troublesome.”

I couldn't just let it continue crawl up the spear handle. When I poured in more of Lightning God's power, the blood shot up with a crackling noise. It headed towards my face, and I smacked it down with my spear blade filled with Lightning God's power.

“Ruyue, stop the blood falling from the ceiling! Peika, Sharana!”

[From the 81st floor, you cannot have three elementals out at the same time.]

Along with Sherafina's explanation, only Peika appeared in front of me. When she saw the blood creeping towards me from all sides, she freaked out and released lightning.

[Creepy! Burn up!]

“Peika, they're mana eaters. You need to use a lot of power!”

[Got it!]

While Peika and Ruyue frantically stopped the blood from encroaching, I hurriedly took out a mana potion and gulped it down.

Meanwhile, more and more blood appeared. Seeing a stream of blood shooting up from the ground underneath me, I got startled and stabbed it with my spear. When the property of a liquid mixed with the property of a mana eater, it became extremely tricky to deal with. As I couldn't just stand here and block them forever, I began to run. As I saw more and more blood filling up the hallway, I became a bit tired.

“What the hell are these things!?”

I considered using Elemental Tempest, but gave up as I was afraid of the mana eaters annihilating the elementals' existence. In the end, I used Heroic Strikes to cut apart the flood of blood and shouted in annoyance. Although I wasn't expecting an answer, a voice replied to the annoyed shout.

[They are 'Crimson Hell', the world's enemy that almost ruined the world Pantiran.]

... Say what?

Chapter 282. Third Season (7)

[Starting from the 81st floor, monsters that match the explorer's league will appear. It is the dungeon's way to help heighten the explorer's league. If exploring in a party, the enemy will be readjusted to match the party's standard.]

“... That's great. No, but what about Floor Masters?”

[If exploring in a party, Floor Masters are fixed. If Kang Shin-nim continues to climb alone, we have special Floor Masters prepared. The Crimson Hell on this floor are only clones of the real Crimson Hell. Its real body is on the 85th floor.]

Wait, these guys were just clones? With this terrifying of an ability? I suddenly began to hold great admiration for the explorers and warriors that fought against them in Pantiran continent. At the same time, Sherafina finally said something to make me feel better.

[Additionally, this is the first time since the dungeon's founding that Crimson Hell has been used as a monster. If you continue to break through alone, you will receive an appropriate reward for this achievement.]

“Mmm, that is tempting.”

[Because of the world's enemy's special trait, Beyond has its own monsters. Please keep that in mind.]

“So even if I fight worlds’ enemies here, they won’t appear again on Beyond’s 41st floor? Then will I just face stronger versions of what other explorers face?”

[Yes.]

That’s what I wanted but... Just how did they bring worlds’ enemies into the dungeon!? Worlds’ enemies were basically final bosses of the attacking world, how could they bring them in here? Almost as if she was reading my mind, Sherafina immediately added.

[The power of worlds’ enemies isn’t absolute. Between annihilation and subservience, many choose subservience.]

“That’s amazing.”

I murmured quietly. Even so, having worlds’ enemies trapped in the dungeon... I had a feeling that there was more to it than what Sherafina said. Sherafina might even be strong enough to save all worlds without anyone else having to help her. Of course, there had to be a reason she was just administering the dungeon.

[All enemies from now will be unpredictable. I advise you to take time to analyze their abilities.]

“No, that’s okay.”

I didn't expect the dungeon to show monsters matching my standard, but even if the 81st floor had fixed monsters, I didn't plan on getting information about them from Loretta. That would be possible in the dungeon, but on Earth and on other worlds, it was impossible for me to know everything about enemies I met. I needed to be able to deal with enemies I didn't know anything about.

... Still, this was too much!

“Huu...!”

I took a deep breath and swung my spear, shooting several aura waves flying. It seemed they couldn't absorb powerful auras as blood exploded everywhere. I then raised Absolute Soul to its peak strength. No matter how my Absolute Soul's level was, I wouldn't be able to freely absorb mana from these mana eaters, but I would at least be able to minimize the mana I lost.

“Yeah, I can just think of this floor as a place to train Absolute Soul.”

Even as I half-jokingly said that, I frowned. If there was one thing I was sure about, it was that I wouldn't be able to break through the floor in a couple of hours. If I tried to fly in this place, I would be swept over by a tsunami of blood and never make it out.

“Alright, let's go.”

What could I do? I pondered as I struck down lumps of blood with my spear. My aura and elemental power were both only at half their strength. Lightning God's power was somewhat efficient, but it wasn't the perfect answer. Making direct contact with them had more disadvantages than advantages.

“Peika, Ruyue! Break through the front for now!”

[Got it!]

[Eit!]

I didn't need to conserve mana. I poured plenty of mana into them and focused on Peruta Circuit. Mana surpassing 500,000 points circulated around my body, filling up my body and materializing outside. It seemed the whirlpool of mana appearing around me looked tasty to these Crimson Hell clones, as they surged towards me like raging waves. Just how did people from Pantiran continent fight these guys without Absolute Soul? I could only sigh.

“Now that I think about it...”

While sending Peika and Ruyue about 10% of my mana in a single moment, I scanned over my skills in the skill window and suddenly stopped when I saw a skill. Breath of Death. It was the skill I got from defeating the Death Knight.

“This skill let me wield aura of death.”

It was a skill that let me absorb the energy of lives I took. I could breathe it out and use it to attack, but I could also use it as an aura by cladding my weapon with it like I did with Lightning God's power or elemental power. Simply put, this skill let me use death aura which usually belonged to peak rank undead. Though I wasn't sure because I'd never used it, it should have marvelous effect against any living beings.

The wave of blood surged towards me without sound. Ruyue and Peika seemed to be pushing it back, but even bigger waves erupted from behind in a never-ending cycle. I never would have thought I would face such a scene in the First Dungeon.

Before it was too late, I used Breath of Death and searched for the collected death energy within me. It was inside a small sphere near my heart. As I killed a terrifying number of enemies in Edias continent, the sphere was full to the point it was leaking out energy.

When I drew it in my spear with Peruta Circuit, the already black Chaotic Spear began to emit an ominous energy and was dyed in a deeper black. Even I didn't want to touch this aura with my hands. However, I wasn't done yet.

“Chaos flame.”

I whispered and ignited chaos flames. When it mixed with death aura, black flames instantly shot up on my spear with an dreary force. It looked even more formidable than the aura Death Knight

wielded. As I controlled the aura and checked its power, I was shocked to find I could maintain it for over a year.

Did I kill that many lives in Edias continent? Really...

“Good, at least I won’t have to worry about running out of energy!”

It was great ! I immediately tested this new power. Even though it was called death aura, it couldn’t defy Peruta Circuit’s control. The blazing death flames enveloped my spear in a whirlpool shape and became fiercer. When Peika and Ruyue couldn’t hold out any more and took a step back, I pushed forward and shot out the flame whirlpool in all directions.

“How’s this!?”

Of course, the Crimson Hell clones didn’t say anything. They couldn’t. They could only detect mana and move towards it greedily. The death flames had a terrifying effect. Any blood that touched the flames began to grow darker, and the blackness continued to spread to parts that didn’t touch the flames. The blood fell back realizing something was wrong, but the parts that touched the flames had already burned up and disappeared.

Flames that burn until the target’s death mixed with the aura of death. No matter how voracious these mana eaters were, they were still alive in the end. The combination of chaos flames and death aura directly countered their existence. I had found my answer.

“Perfect! Peika, Ruyue, you two can go rest now. Thanks.”

[Un. I don't want to deal with them.]

[Call us if you need help!]

When the two elementals who showed great firepower disappeared, they rushed towards me, forgetting about the loss they just suffered. Perhaps they planned on leaving parts of their bodies to die so they can focus on devouring me. It seemed I needed to remind them who the real predator was.

“Huhu, I can even do this now!”

Death flames, which originally only spun around my spear, suddenly grew bigger following the increasing size of the whirlpool. As Peruta Circuit's spin got fiercer by a level, the whirlpool around my spear combined with the whirlpool enveloping my body. I felt a bit out of breath in this whirlpool of flames, but it wasn't to the point my movements were affected.

To be honest, I was still a bit scared, but I let myself go and jumped into the raging wave of blood.

“Uooooooooo!”

The feeling I got when I first made contact with them wasn't bad. The wave was immediately dyed black and burned up before evaporating helplessly. Still, the wave of blood continued to rush

towards me, sweeping over the whirlpool covering me. With their special trait of absorbing mana, even if they couldn't absorb death aura, they should still be able to absorb the mana forming chaos flames. The whirlpool began to lose strength. I couldn't believe my eyes.

“I didn't want to do this, but...!”

Now that it had come to this, I had no other choice. I poured about 200,000 points worth of mana into the whirlpool. Its death flames instantly began to blaze fiercer as it expanded outward. The approaching wave of blood seemed to be startled as it jumped back.

“Let's see if I run out of mana or if you fully evaporate! Uaaaaaaah!”

I howled and began to run under the wave of blood surrounded by only my flaming whirlpool! The hand holding the Chaotic Spear constantly moved around, piercing through the front to make a way, while the whirlpool of flames surrounding my body endlessly resisted the wave of blood using my mana. I then summoned Sharana and even added Wind King's Rage.

[These guys are so annoying. I'll strengthen you soon, Master!]

Sharana's strengthened wind energy joined the flaming whirlpool and created a terrifying force. Eventually, I stopped seeing the wave of blood in front of me. Crimson Hell, which had once been close enough to touch my nose, was completely blocked the whirlpool and couldn't approach me at all.

As I continued to run, I gulped down a mana potion. It tasted like a strawberry banana shake.

“Kuu... I don’t even feel like I drank anything.”

No matter how expensive the mana potion I drank was, it couldn’t fill more than 20% of my mana, and I could only use it as an extra support. Thankfully, with the mana I stole using Absolute Soul and Peruta Circuit continuously absorbing the surrounding me, I could barely maintain my whirlpool.

“Good, let’s keep going!”

[Leave it to me, Master!]

Sharana’s power harmonized with any power and strengthened it. She drew her power to its limit, and the 3 meter radius whirlpool raged fiercely and evaporated Crimson Hell. I felt like I could hear their screams of despair.

“Uaaaaaaah!”

Almost as if I could defeat them with sound, I shouted at the top of my lungs and charged forward. It was a secret that I thought I looked cool as I ran through a sea of blood with a flaming whirlpool around me.

Two days and three hours after that, I managed to break through the 81st floor with my mana completely drained.

Chapter 283. Third Season (8)

“Shim-nim, are you okay!?”

When I came back to the mansion all tattered from breaking through the 81st floor, I was caught by Sumire.

“Ah, Sumire, this is... Mm, I just had a pretty long fight.”

“You look tired. Please wash up and sleep.”

“Yeah, I will.”

I retorted half-heartedly and wondered why Sumire was out in the garden. Before I could continue my thoughts, however, Sumire clapped her hands and asked.

“Would you like me to wash your back? I often did it when my father was still alive.”

“I’ll have to refuse. For the record, don’t do that to a man unless you plan on marrying him.”

“Yes...?”

Hm? Don’t tell me Sumire was treating me like I was her father? Rather than that, Sumire’s father made a grown up girl wash his back!? I fell into stupor. At the same time, I saw a piece of the

garden land flipped over from the corner of my eyes. No, it wasn't just flipped over. Since there were some plants growing on it, it looked like someone was growing some vegetables.

When Sumire saw what I was looking at, she smiled sweetly.

“Ah, those things. You see, vegetables from the Residential Area don't grow well on Earth. But when I tried growing them here, they magically grew well. Isn't the dungeon amazing?”

I immediately thought back to Iana and Pookie, the two corpses fermented by the elementals in the garden. It was likely Marianne's Garden being special rather than the dungeon itself, but I didn't tell Sumire my thoughts. I figured she wouldn't need to go into other mansions or residences of the Residential Area.

I also just realized that Sumire was wearing a comfortable clothes, an apron, and a pair of work gloves stained with dirt. Among the guild members, she was probably the most family-oriented girl.

I don't think Hwaya would be the type to do something like this, and Ye-Eun confidently said she was good at cooking ramen, which meant she wasn't good at cooking anything else. Only Ludia, who helped Mother with chores around the house, had the potential to surpass her. Still, to think Sumire was growing vegetables here... I spoke with a bitter smile.

“You could just buy them.”

“Hehe, I’m just taking care of them whenever I’m taking a break from training. I don’t plan on climbing the dungeon until I learn the technique Shin-nim taught me.”

“Why?”

“Erm... It’s a bit embarrassing, but after I saw Shin-nim’s spear attack, I subconsciously kept trying to use it whenever I held a spear. I figured it was better to climb the dungeon after I learned it to a usable level. I became a First Dungeon explorer, after all.”

“Ah, right, Sumire entered the First Dungeon too.”

“Yes, it’s been a bit under a month!”

... I only showed it to her once. Did it get stuck in her mind? If she wasn’t talented, I might have scolded myself for stunting her growth, but Sumire was a genius even amongst all the geniuses I’ve seen, so I probably didn’t need to worry. I believed she would learn this technique even quicker than I imagined. With that in mind, there was only one thing I could do to help her.

“Do you want to spar after I take a shower? I have to impart Peruta Circuit to you in the afternoon, so it’s a good opportunity.”

“Yes! Ah, n-no... Shin-nim should rest. We can spar afterwards...”

“I’ll be fine once I take a bath. I’ll be back in a bit.”

“Yes, yes!”

She didn't refuse a second time. With a grin, I waved my hand and headed to the bath. The grand bathroom on the first floor was big enough to be a public bath from Rome. Although it wasn't used often, it was the best place to relieve fatigue after a tiring day. After walking to the men's bath, I realized there was another visitor. It was Father.

“Oh, you're back? It took a while this time.”

“Father, I'll chase you out if you fart in the bath.”

“Is that the first thing you say to your father?”

“Can you blame me with how many times I suffered from it?”

I threw a bucket of hot water over me and stepped into the hot bath. Father retorted as he snickered.

“Don't worry, my body isn't what it used to be. I can control most physiological phenomenon.”

“Ah.”

With what he said, I scanned over Father's body. He always had a tough build and his face was always younger than he actually was.

Looking at him now, however, he didn't just look younger. He was practically a handsome man in his mid-30's!

“... Did you remold your body or something, Father?”

“Hmph, I only made a slight breakthrough in my spearmanship.”

I flinched. I remembered the moment I mastered Peruta Circuit when my body broke down once and reforged itself. Just in case, I asked him.

“Father, did your body break down and reappear, or anything like that?”

“Mm, no, not really.”

This time, Father flinched. His leisurely face had a slight tension to it.

“I did feel my body being renewed. It felt like my mind was clearing up, and I had an epiphany or some sort. I felt like I finally understood what mana was and the nature of the power I had. But you... Your body broke down?”

“Maybe that was because I learned Peruta Circuit.”

“Hmm.”

Father really hated losing to his son. What he said next made me blank out for a moment.

“Are you going to teach it to your mom?”

“Huh?”

“Your mom. Shouldn’t you teach her something? Even if she doesn’t become an explorer.”

After blanking out a bit longer, I shook my head.

“Peruta Circuit isn’t that easy to learn. Still, it’ll be nice to teach her a mana cultivation method. I think you should teach her yours.”

At the same time, I fell in thought. I neglected Mother recently, and with everything that’s going on with the dungeon, Earth, monsters, and demons, the number of times I saw her could be counted on one hand. I felt sorry, then I felt relieved that Father was so devoted to Mother.

How enticing was the dungeon? If you were skilled, beautiful female explorers lined up to receive your help. With Father’s skill, even if he had a face that would make an orc call him elder brother, there would still be explorers that would jump at him. Mother was also a beauty when she was young, but compared to the dungeon where beauties of all races gathered...

“You see, this woman keeps scolding me for eating good things by myself.”

“Rather than waiting for Mother to get younger by mastering a mana cultivation method, it’ll probably be quicker to bring her items that do that.”

“I doubt items that make you younger are common. Don’t say such absurd things.’

I could understand how Mother would feel excluded. Other than her, everyone in the family became dungeon explorers. Now that her husband suddenly looked much younger, even I felt a bit guilty.

“I’ll try to look for it too, Father. If I have time while saving the world, that is.”

“You might as well just say I should solve it on my own.”

Father slapped the surface of the water, creating a vibration that shot a water bullet towards me. I put the tip of my hand underwater and created a small whirlpool to block it. It was a playful water fight between a father and a son, but if an ordinary person was hit by that bullet, he would most certainly die.

“Shin, I heard you’re here. There’s something I need to tell you!”

At that moment, someone rushed into the bath. The only person

who would call me like this was Hwaya. Even knowing that I was in the bath, she barged in confidently and stared at me brazenly. Thankfully, both Father and I had our underparts covered. When she saw that Father was here, she made a face that easily read ‘what a shame.’

“Oh, Ajusshi was here too.”

“Can’t you act more embarrassed? Actually, don’t come in here! Can’t you just send a message!?”

“Why would I do that? We’re in the same house, so isn’t it better to talk face to face? It’s not like you and Ajusshi are naked.”

With Hwaya acting shameless, I became lost for words. While I was thinking hard about what to say, Hwaya stuck out her tongue and continued.

“Sorry, my bad, I didn’t think Ajusshi was here too. I’ll apologize. I’m sorry, Ajusshi.”

“It’s fine, Hwaya. Like you said, it’s not like I’m naked. Plus, you’ll be my daughter soon anyways.”

“Hehe, I knew Ajusshi was on my side! I’ll serve you well later!”

Dear god, Father was already compromised! When I sighed with my hand on my forehead, she apologized to me again and added.

“I thought it was the perfect chance to take you out and I ended up being let down, so aren’t we even?”

This woman just revealed her intention of trying to attack a son in front of his father.

“Father, she’s like this.”

“Isn’t it wonderful? Your mother keeps saying she wants to see her grandson, and I’m perfectly fine if it’s Hwaya. I feel a bit bad about Ludia, but can’t you take them both? There’s a huge decrease in population because of monsters, so you should do your best.”

Since when did Father and Mother become so progressive? Or was I just too conservative? I first gestured at Hwaya to go... No, go out, not come in!

“I was kidding. I really just ran in because I was in a hurry.”

“If you really were in a hurry, you could have just messaged me...”

Hwaya whistled and avoided my gaze. So she was in a hurry but had other intentions too? Trying to achieve two goals with one move, a true tactician! Since she was cute, I forgave her.

“If you don’t plan on leaving, just tell me what you came for.”

“Right, we found another king. Including an SS rank ability user we made into an explorer, a total of 150 people went missing. The succubi managed to capture a video they barely sent.”

Damn, can’t I relax and take a bath!? I shot up and shouted.

“If that’s what happened, say it earlier!”

“I told you I was in a hurry... Oh, how nice.”

Nice my ass! ... was what I was going to yell, but I realized that my lower body felt breezy. Although my body was tougher than steel, the towel wrapped around my waist wasn’t, and it couldn’t hold its position against my abrupt movement.

“W-What...”

After realizing what happened, I sat back down and shouted.

“Kyaaaaaak!”

“... Shin, that’s the wrong reaction.”

Hwaya added as she continued to stare at me fixedly. I didn’t think that was the correct reaction either. But hey, can you look

away!?

In the end, another 5 minutes passed before I put my clothes back on and returned to Earth.

Chapter 284. The Last Member (1)

After putting on my clothes, I headed to our guild house in Jongno with Hwaya. As I sat in the back of the car, I kept grumbling.

“How can you joke in a situation like this?”

“It’s like not being a minute or two early is going to solve anything. It’s better to relax and take things slow. If they were going to die, they would already be dead.”

Hwaya spoke casually as she put her lips near my ear.

“The explorer that went missing this time was contracted to Daisy. According to Daisy’s report, he’s already dead. The media thinks they’re just missing, but... You get what I mean, right?”

“Can you not whisper such a chilling story in my ear?”

Hwaya lightly smiled and suddenly gave a deep sigh.

“I’m not happy either. Just when I thought we wouldn’t have to worry about explorers betraying us, one of them went ahead and died. If we end up being the only explorers alive...”

“Let’s gather everyone up once this is over. I don’t think the new explorers will ever get to stand on the front lines though...”

Hwaya looked at me astonished.

“Really?”

“Yeah, I don’t think we even have a year left.”

“If that’s what our Hero says, I have no choice but to believe you... Mmm.”

It seemed what I said wasn’t something she could just glance over. She made a groaning sound, then suddenly said something absurd.

“Should we make a kid?”

“How did you come to that conclusion? A girl shouldn’t say something like that easily.”

“I’m not joking. I don’t want to think about it, but you know, just in case something happens... I want to give birth to our child before that happens...”

I thought she joking, but she had a serious expression. She looked and acted like a Westerner, but she was quite Korean when it came to something like this. Or maybe it was the combination of her boldness and Korean personality that made her say astonishing things like this. In any case, I answered her by pinching her

cheeks.

“Neither of us will die, so don’t worry about such nonsense.”

“Uuuu.”

“Plus, it will be the end for Earth if I die, so it won’t matter even if we make a kid.”

“But what if I die? You’re going to regret it in ten or so years, and you’ll think, ‘Gee, I wish I had a daughter who looked like Hwaya...’”

“You want a daughter?”

“Isn’t that obvious? What’s the point in raising a son? So, will you make a daughter with me?”

“I’ll think about it after I defeat the Demon Lord.”

Hwaya pouted like a duck.

“Hmph, do I really have to die to make you think properly?”

“You won’t die. I won’t let you, so don’t say stupid things like that.”

“As always, you’re only talk... Ah.”

I embraced Hwaya. She stopped what she was going to say and became quiet.

“Sorry for making you feel uneasy.”

Hwaya spoke with a flustered voice.

“Uh, mm... N-No, I’m sorry too...”

She might have acted like she was fine, but she must have felt great pressure from this incident. She was the person in charge of almost all of Revival’s operations, and naturally she had to worry about Earth’s situation the most. This time, things had progressed too quickly and even a king had made its move.

There was no way she could be fine in a situation like this. The reason she was joking around must have been to hide her anxiousness too. I could only see this now when she was saying rather extreme things.

... Analyzing her words and actions until now, I could consider her barging into the bath as a result of her anxiousness and desire to make a child, but I decided not to think that way as it was scary.

“Did you calm down?”

“M-Maybe, b-but I’m getting nervous in another sense...”

“That’s fine.”

When I tried to let her go, Hwaya shook her head and dug deeper into my embrace.

“Just until we get to the guild house.”

“Acting spoiled at your age?”

“You’re forbidden from talking about age!”

Hwaya shouted sharply. She was 25 this year in Korean age. She was three years older than me. Because of it, she tried to change the topic whenever her age came up in our conversation. With a bitter smile, I closed my mouth.

When I gave up trying to keep her off, Hwaya put her arms around me and held me tightly. Then, she murmured quietly.

“Sorry for saying strange things.”

“That was quick.”

“Thanks for accepting everything. This too...”

“Yeah, yeah.”

I stroked Hwaya’s back. Hwaya made a satisfied laugh and embraced me more comfortably. If it was the usual her, I would have refused to be this intimate, but today was special. Like she said, I planned on staying this way until we arrived at the guild house.

At that moment, a dry cough rang out from the front seat.

“It’s nice being young, isn’t it, Son? Flirting in front of your father...”

“Since you weren’t talking, you should’ve stayed that way until we arrived.”

It seemed Hwaya had really forgotten about the driver, as she froze stiff when she heard Father’s voice. However, as expected of Hwaya, she didn’t leave my embrace.

As soon as we arrived at the guild house, we first checked the video we received. Revival members currently staying in Korea were all present, and they naturally joined us to watch the video. When the video came on, the first thing we saw was a countless number of people filling up the heart of a city and a gate floating in the sky.

“An Event Dungeon? But I didn’t receive any notifications!”

“Yes, that’s the problem. There was no notification.”

A succubus reported. Then, another video popped up next to the video we were watching. It was also showing a floating gate.

“It’s a different place, right?”

“Yes. The first gate is where the king appeared. As for the second gate, no one has gone in yet. The former is located in France’s Bordeaux, the latter is in St. Peter’s Basilica in Vatican City.”

“There of all places!?”

I smacked my forehead. It was in the perfect place to cause a headache. Setting aside its religious importance, a monument of an enormous historical value was about to disappear. Of course, that was if couldn’t clear the Event Dungeon.

Wait, a king appeared in a dungeon? Sure, cameras worked inside an Event Dungeon, but how was it possible to live stream it to the outside world?

“Was the video sent from inside the Event Dungeon?”

“Yes, through a dungeon explorer. It was possible only because he was a dungeon explorer. Sadly, the video was cut off the moment they were discovered by the king.”

It was still amazing that we managed to procure a video. Being a dungeon explorer sure had its benefits. I nodded silently and examined the two gates.

When Event Dungeons appeared, Sherafina would normally tell us their ranks to minimize the risk we'd have to take. This time, however, neither of the two dungeons were ranked. Of course, since we didn't even get a notification, it would be strange to expect them to be ranked.

Without a doubt, they were one of those.

“More things that ignore the dungeon's power? Ehew.”

“We'll face more of them in the future. That in itself isn't surprising, but what I'm afraid of is...”

What was only possible for the demons was now possible for the monsters. This made my head hurt.

“Hero-nim, can I say something?”

Ciara spoke up. The crosses in her eyes were shining brilliantly.

“Speak.”

“Both places have kings.”

In an instant, silence descended. Coincidentally, the first video was showing people entering the gate. A dense jungle appeared along with giant monsters. I stared at the video intently, then turned towards Ciara and asked.

“... You know what we mean by ‘king’, right?”

“The head of the monsters, five leaders working for an unknown being. Two of them already died to Hero-nim’s hands.”

“That’s exactly right.”

It seemed I needed to apologize for underestimating Ciara’s power. Now that she could better control her Evil Eyes’ power, she was no longer who she was in the past.

But if what she said was true, it meant we had a steep mountain to climb. I asked Ciara another question.

“You can tell even if you’re far away now?”

“No, before that video came to the succubi, I had a dream. Hero-nim knows that my ability manifests in many ways, right?”

“Yeah.”

“After my eyes opened, my dreams became even clearer. I often have clairvoyant daydreams, and I can somewhat control what I

want to see.”

“What you want to see?”

“Yes. The world is saved by Hero-nim, and Earth continuing peacefully under Hero-nim’s reign...”

“Nevermind that, tell me what you saw.”

“Yes!”

Ciara explained slowly. At the same time, the group that went into Bordeaux’s gate was facing a truly massive creature. It looked like a lion and had two frightening yellow eyes.

“The Beast King, the four-legged ruler of all savage beasts. He is strong and fast, an overlord who can cut and destroy anything with pure strength. Other than Hero-nim, only Daisy Ectradion-nim has the potential to win against him. Kang Yungoong-nim, Minami Violet Sumire-nim, and Su Ye-Eun-nim are included if we’re only talking about stalling for time.”

Ciara said solemnly as if she was making a proclamation. As if to prove her words, the lion stomped with one leg and caused the earth to quake and fall. When he roared, the entire jungle blew away. Rather than a creature, that was more of a calamity in the form of a creature. It seemed he was even stronger than the Lava King.

Seeing the lion's imposing display, I blurted out.

“Ren, work harder. You're falling behind Ye-Eun and Sumire against a lion. That's an extra month of Ren's thrashing phase.”

“Kuuuu...!”

Ren made a mortified expression. Thankfully, Father's spearmanship and mana control improved, and he joined the lineup of people who could fight. Otherwise, the guild's men would have been embarrassed to no end.

“The other one is the King of the Dead, one who rules over all corpses and despises all living beings. He has powerful magic power and antimagic. He does not die even if he's killed. Only Hero-nim and Hwaya Eleni Mastiford-nim can compare with him, and Daisy Ectradion-nim must be present when fighting him. His immortality cannot be broken without Hero-nim's final move or Daisy-nim's power. “

Daisy who was listening on suddenly sparkled her eyes.

“Corpses? Are there lots of good corpses? Lots of pretty corpses?”

“Yes.”

“King of the Dead... Good, very good, very very good.”

“Can the word ‘dangerous’ be in there somewhere?”

Meanwhile, the video ended with the lion breathing an acidic breath. Missing my ass, it would be a miracle if there was even a single survivor. Damn it.

I pressed my brows and asked Ciara.

“By the way, what do you mean by my final move?”

“The eye’s power.”

“My Evil Eyes? I wouldn’t really consider that my—”

“No, I mean Hero-nim’s third eye.”

I immediately closed my mouth. I began to feel fear at Ciara’s power. If I made someone with this power my enemy... No, she wouldn’t be able to do this if I didn’t open her eyes, but still, I felt relieved knowing that she was on our side.

“Actually, I had two dreams today. The first alerted me of the two kings. In the second dream, Hero-nim was already using that power against a black-eyed man with a giant shadow and two twisted horns.”

The Demon Lord. I instinctively realized who she was talking about and bit my lips. Ludia’s eyes also shook when she heard

Ciara's description. Right, Ludia had directly faced him before. I hoped I could ease Ludia's worry as I continued to ask Ciara what happened.

"Did I win?"

"I'm sorry, Hero-nim. I couldn't see that far. All I know is that Hero-nim would lose if Hero-nim doesn't use the eye's power."

"..."

Since I was expecting the same thing, I didn't put Shiva's Eye into the calculation of my total strength. I didn't know when the Demon Lord would appear, and Shiva's Eye was a critical power that could only be used once per year.

As if to confirm my thoughts, Ciara looked at me straight on and spoke.

"In conclusion, Hero-nim cannot use the eye's power from now on. The Demon Lord will descend before a year passes."

I shut my eyes tightly. I understood why Ciara was saying all this. This is what she wanted to say.

Save your strength.

No matter what happens today.

Author's note:

Wow, you can really feel the atmosphere of a novel that's closing in on its end. Personally, I think Ciara should have been deployed sooner. I'm regretting it a bit as the author. She came so late, and she's talking so much by herself. T.T

Chapter 285. The Last Member (2)

I noticed everyone's gazes on me. They were all relying on me to act. It was a bit troubling that they couldn't come to their own conclusions, but... I still voiced my thoughts.

"We can trust Ciara's ability. The two kings must be in these two dungeons. You all know what kings are, right?"

"Yes, of course."

Though she missed her chance to spar with me, Sumire's eyes were burning with eagerness. Last time, even though she clearly voiced her desire to fight, she couldn't do so because of her lack of ability. As she was chosen this time as one of the approved members, her eagerness was understandable.

"Don't push yourself too much, Sumire. Got it?"

"Yes, Shin-nim!"

That wasn't the most trustworthy answer, but there wasn't much I could do about it. I continued with a slight sense of unease.

"When we take care of these two kings, only one king will remain from the original five. It looks like there's an even stronger one above them, but we'll still be able to greatly undercut the monsters' forces. Once we kill the five kings, monsters of the attribute they control will grow weaker, so we have to make sure

to hunt them down. We can't neglect Event Dungeons either."

"How are you going to decide on the members?"

Hwaya immediately asked the tough question. I looked around at Revival's members. There were some that wanted to sit back. I couldn't blame them. Those who were present when we fought the Lava King knew the monstrous power these kings possessed.

"Me, Hwaya, Daisy, Father, Ye-Eun, Sumire... and Ina. Is that okay?"

"Un! I'll help Daddy! I don't want Daddy to get hurt!"

Right, Ina was never hesitant to participate in fights. Perhaps, she didn't understand what fear was. If possible, I wanted her to continue that way for all of her life.

I hugged Ina, who shot her hands up energetically. With an innocent laugh, she rubbed her face against mine. Someone looked at Ina enviously, but I ignored it. I felt like knowing who it was would give me more trouble than it was worth.

"The seven of us will go together. Against the kings, we can't split our forces. We'll attack the dungeons one by one."

"Yes!"

“Mm, why is it so hard to get acknowledged by my son...”

“Corpses, corpses, uhuhu. Uhuhuhu.”

While everyone else seemed full of spirit to fight the kings, Daisy alone laughed somewhat perverted thinking about corpses. I smacked her forehead to snap her out of it, then looked back at everyone.

“There’s something I need to ask everyone else to do. To be honest, two kings appearing at once is too strange. I feel like there’s more to it than what’s on the surface.”

I looked back at Ciara just in case. She shook her head.

“Sorry, Hero-nim. My ability isn’t complete yet. I can’t read any further into the future.”

“No, it’s fine. The information you gave is already more than enough. Thanks, Ciara.”

“Ah, Hero-nim...!”

Ah shit, I shouldn’t have said that. Ciara’s face reddened and she stepped closer to me. I frowned, thinking I dug my own grave, and pushed Ciara away before continuing.

“Mobilize all of the succubi and let them focus their attention on

any changes to Earth. This includes areas currently conquered by monsters. In fact, if it's necessary, just wipe them out completely."

"Really? I thought we were going to take our time reclaiming other regions. The Philippines is still under reconstruction, didn't Guild Master say we had two years?"

Ilayda voiced her question. She wasn't wrong, but things had changed. I told her exactly what Ciara told me.

"Sorry if it sounded too rushed, but the two years I talked about was the time we had until the Demon Lord invaded Earth. That's how much time we thought we had, but it's different now. There's less than a year until the Demon Lord's descent, and it might even be less than three months. We have to act fast."

"Is the reason their ability to ignore the dungeon's power?"

I nodded solemnly.

"It's not just Earth. All worlds related to the dungeon might be facing similar situations. There's a great change on the horizon, one that will make the simultaneous appearance of two kings pale in comparison. Ilayda, we have to do what we can before things go out of control. You're with us, right?"

"O-Of course! If it's for you, I'll do anything!"

At my serious tone, Ilayda nodded vehemently with a flushed

face. While I tilted my head, thinking something was strange, Licorice approached me and whispered in my ear.

“Dear Husband, you’re not controlling your power right now.”

“Ah.”

Shoot, because I was nervous, I was unknowingly releasing my charm and magic power. Damn, I still lacked training. I tried to fix the situation, but my body wouldn’t listen to me. Ciara’s words seemed to have shocked me more than I thought. Thinking I should quickly leave this place, I took a deep breath and made a final announcement.

“I said everything I needed to. The six members coming with me should follow me. Everyone else should also immediately set out! Make sure to report on your situation thoroughly, and do not get hurt! Understood?”

“Yes!”

“You’re sounding more like a leader now.”

“A truly fiery development!”

“No idle talks.”

“Chet.”

We immediately set out. Our first destination was France's Bordeaux, as there still may be survivors. The seven of us hopped on Hwaya's private plane.

As for everyone else, besides Leon who was training with Lin, they were working together in a single group.

“First, Deific Manifestation. Can everyone use it?”

“I can.”

“Same. True name's power is also ready.”

“What about everyone else?”

Besides Daisy and me, only Hwaya, Ina, and Sumire possessed gods' true names. Hwaya and Sumire nodded, while Ina tilted her head.

“I can use... one.”

“You mean your god's true name has several abilities, and you can only use one?”

“Un!”

Ina seemed happy that I knew exactly what she meant, as she smiled brightly. What an angel.

How can she get prettier by the day? Even if I search all of the numerous worlds, will I be able to find a worthy boyfriend for her? No, there was no way someone like that existed. It seemed I had to hold onto her for the rest of my life. Huu...

“Save it until it’s absolutely necessary, okay?”

“Un!”

“Good.”

“We’re almost there.”

If we had time, I would have liked to taste Bordeaux’s famous wines. Unfortunately, the gate was in Bordeaux’s sky and we weren’t in any position to leisurely sip on wine.

“Everyone’s in the party?”

“Yes.”

“The dungeon’s power probably won’t work, so have your potions out. If you have Elixirs, make sure to have them ready.”

Hopefully, we wouldn't be in a situation where we needed to use Elixirs, but we had to be prepared against the kings. Even the weakest Hermit King made me nervous, but now we were about to face kings of the same level or even higher level as the Lava King.

“Beast King's corpse, give me, yes?”

“Yeah, you can take it.”

“Wedding gift? Kang Shin, I'm still too young.”

“I think your brain is too young.”

At that moment, the plane came to a stop. I didn't know how it worked, but I could tell it had all the latest technology. The plane's door opened, and even as I faced the violent wind, I was completely unfazed as I looked back at the party members.

“I'll jump in. Since we're in a party, everyone should be moved when I enter the dungeon.”

“I want to go with Daddy.”

Despite what I said, Ina didn't want to let go of me. Thankful for how much she thought about me, I patted Ina gently.

“Sure, let's go together.”

I pecked her cheek and jumped out of the plane with her. Sharana, who I already had summoned, guided us to fall on the gate. As I fell into the black gate letting out ominous energy, I shut my eyes and successfully entered the dungeon.

However, Ina who was in my arms a moment ago was no longer with me.

“... What?”

I looked around flustered. I was undoubtedly in the jungle I saw in the video. Although I didn't get any messages about having entered an Event Dungeon, I was sure that I was in one.

But there was no one else here. It wasn't just Ina. None of the other party members were here. Not even Licorice or Lotte.

“What happened...?”

I felt a chill go down my back. In the next moment, a thought flashed through my mind. I was in an area that the dungeon couldn't designate as an Event Dungeon. It was stupid to think a party formed through the dungeon's power would function the same way.

But what about those guys in the video? So many people entered the gate together just fine, but how come I was the only one who ended up this way?

I tried to open my friend list, but it was futile. That meant I couldn't send any messages. Neither the guild communication channel or the explorer communication channel opened.

[You're finally here?]

At that moment, a thunderous voice rang out. I turned around. A golden-maned lion, far bigger than the one I saw in the video, was looking down at me. He seemed to have been waiting for my arrival.

[I finally meet you, Savior Hero.]

“You...!?”

I broke out in a cold sweat. It was partly because I felt his heavy power, but it was mostly because of the sense of unease in this uncontrollable situation.

No, calm down. Even if I was alone, I should be able to beat him. I've overcome countless life-threatening situations. Even if I lost the dungeon's power, I should still be fine!

[In conclusion, Hero-nim cannot use the eye's power from now on. The Demon Lord will descend before a year passes.]

At that moment, Ciara's words popped up in my head. Did she foresee this situation? No, that was impossible. There was no way she would have kept quiet if she saw me in danger. Still, she still

should have felt something. No, could it be a different kind of danger than this...!?

[Are you worrying about them, Hero?]

The lion talked. Them? His words made me space out. I knew far too well who “them” referred to.

Right, why was I worried about myself? I was the strongest person on Earth. Even in this situation, I was confident in being able to defeat the Beast King. But I was thinking in the wrong direction.

[It's too late, so don't worry, Hero. This time, all kings have come out.]

All kings. In other words, the last king was also on Earth.

In that case, I wasn't the one trapped here.

The one trapped was people of Earth, who lost me, their greatest strength.

Chapter 286. The Last Member (3)

Their methods made me speechless. These beings that called themselves kings not only cooperated together, but they did employ such an underhanded scheme to keep me away from everyone else. I didn't know what was happening on Earth, but what I had to do was simple.

I pulled out my Chaotic Spear. Chaos flames naturally ignited above the spear and formed a whirlpool with Peruta Circuit.

“It looks like I'll have to crush you quickly.”

[I enjoy confidence from warriors, but you should know the difference between confidence and arrogance, Hero!]

Immediately afterward, the Beast King opened his mouth and roared. Sharana quickly materialized and enveloped me in a wall of wind. When the two collided, my body was blasted back with an inexpressible howl. I barely managed to stop myself by calling Sharana. The Beast King then broke out into an uncontrollable laughter.

[Kuhahahahaha! How cute!]

“You came up with this scheme because you were so afraid of me, and now you're looking down on me?”

In a case like this, this could only mean one of three things. First

was that this was all an act. However, he didn't have a reason to. He might be setting up a trap by pretending to underestimate me, but he should know I wouldn't fall for such a cheap trick.

Second, what he said before was a lie. There was no plan and the three kings weren't all on Earth. In this case, his goal would have been to provoke me and make me impatient to force me to make mistakes.

But if that were the case, the way he was acting now didn't make sense. Lying to the enemy to force a mistake was something the weaker side would do to a stronger side, not the other way around.

The third possibility was that there was someone else who formulated this plan and made the kings move. This was the most probable situation. I had an idea who it could be too. The one behind the Five Kings, he must have made his move.

[Will you fight!?]

“Do I have any other choice?”

After analyzing the situation in my head, I reached my hands towards the sky. I didn't have any time to waste fighting someone like him. A beast was best fought with another beast. As I was using this power for the first time, I focused my attention on the principle of this power and guided the power within my body.

I shouted.

“Nandi!”

My sight seemed to be dyed red. It was the result of a single word I shouted. A terrifying energy gathered in the sky, and a bone-chilling cry rang out even though its body hadn’t fully formed.

[GUOOOOOOOOO!]

[Hm?]

The Beast King tilted his head. He raised his front leg and slammed down on the ground.

[I don’t know what you did, but it looks like I better subdue you now!]

“Kuk!”

Just by slamming down on the ground, he caused the earth to quake and fissure. Shards of rocks sprung up into the air almost like he used Gaia Buster with an increased range. I shot up into the air and checked my current condition.

First, the stats and skills I earned from climbing the dungeon had decreased by over fifty percent. As unfortunate as it was, with Radiance, Peruta Circuit, and power of gods’ true names, I felt like I could still take him on. At this moment...!

[GUOOOOOOOOOOO!]

Along with a terrifying, it made its appearance. Large crimson body, two dignifying horns, and a completely insane pair of crimson eyes. Snorting from its nostrils, the bull, Nandi, stared at the Beast King! Shockingly, it was just as big as the Beast King.

[Kuhahahaha! I wondered what it was, but it's just a cow! Kuhahaha, you're truly adorable, Hero! Are you really the Savior Hero?]

[GUOOOOOOO!]

Nandi didn't wait for my signal and immediately charged at the Beast King with its head tucked under. The Beast King sneered and jumped back lightly. Of course, even a 'light' jump from the Beast King caused the earth to cave in.

As soon as the Beast King moved, Nandi also changed its direction. The boulders shooting up as he charged forward seemed powerful enough to crush a hundred people. It was truly a battle of two monsters.

[How laughable!]

[GUOOOOOOO!]

In the end, the Beast King and Nandi clashed. One of Nandi's twisted horns pierced the Beast King's shoulder! A fountain of blood exploded in the air.

[Kuk, this is a divine beast!?!]

“You realized it too late!”

After striking the Beast King once, Nandi didn't think to fall back as he continued to push forward while waving his head around. Not only was a bull picking a fight against a lion, it was even pushing it back! No, now wasn't the time to leisurely watch a fight. Although I didn't tell the Beast King, I only had five minutes to utilize Nandi!

“Sharana, quickly. As quickly as you can!”

[Yes!]

“Peika, help me. I need your power.”

[Anytime!]

Sharan and Peika both burst with power. I drew out the power of the Lightning God to its limit. Almost as if I transformed into a lightning bolt, I was shining with a golden radiance.

[A mere bull!]

At the same time, the Beast King opened his mouth and roared at Nandi. Though he was a lion, he could breathe out acid and his roar evenly carried physical strength.

[KAAAOWWWW!]

Nandi's skin peeled off and blood spurted from its body too. However, Nandi was completely unfazed by the injuries and even bucked more fiercely. The Beast King began to shed more blood. At this moment, I landed on his back with my outstretched spear stabbing into it!

[Kuk!]

“You really are huge. You're even bigger than the Lava King!”

[Get off my back!]

“If you pay too much attention to me, who's going to feed my Nandi!?”

Nandi seemed to have understood my words as it kicked the ground with its back foot and struck the Beast King once more. When its horn stabbed into the same place it did before, the Beast King had no choice but to take his eyes off me. As he kicked Nandi away with his front leg, he shouted.

[You impertinent being! Fine, I will end you first!]

[KAOOOOO!]

Shiva's power was truly terrifying. Not even a single one of his power was underwhelming. I raised my spear, and this time, I activated Trishula. Now was the time to do as much damage as I could to the Beast King! I just had to strike him as many times as I could.

“Have you heard of Lightning Spear Storm!? UOOOOOOO!”

All I saw was a wide open back. I decided to think of it as a plot of land. To make it into a fertile field, I would use my spear as a hoe to turn this land upside down! When I thrust my spear, the Beast King's powerful resistance tried to bounce me back. Having lost the dungeon's power, penetrating his skin was honestly difficult, but with Trishula's divine power and Peruta Circuit's rotational force, I had enough power to break through. In the end, the spear I thrust forward was barely enough to penetrate his skin.

[Huhahahaha, this is the power of a Hero!? How laughable!]

“It'll start to itch soon. Nandi, continue!”

[KUOOOOOO!]

Now that I broke through his skin once, my job was easy. This small hole I made would soon become a tunnel!

I thrust out once again, and again, and again. This wasn't even close to the Lightning Spear Storm's true speed! I poured mana into the muscles in my arm and used Divine Speed. The speed I was thrust out with increased by several times.

“Uwaaaak!”

Although there were no messages, dozens of white bones shot up from the sky and struck the point I attacked. Thorn Throne's effect had activated! Immediately, the hole I created expanded and a stream of blood wet my armor.

[Kuaak?]

It seemed not even the Beast King could ignore the previous attack. He shook his body fiercely and struggled to force me off his back. As Nandi's horn was still stuck in his shoulder, its wound expanded and more blood began to shoot out. On the other hand, I desperately held on by grabbing the spear stuck on his back. To think I would become this weak by losing my stats! I couldn't help but grit my teeth.

“Like I'd loooooose!”

The techniques I developed didn't disappear just because I lost a bit of my strength! I held my spear with both hands, focusing my physical power into a single point and striking down. Over half of the spear dug into his back. It seemed he could no longer ignore me.

[Kuaaaaa!]

The moment he screamed, his body trembled and the hair on his body stood straight. Having a bad feeling, I immediately utilized Divine Speed to pull my spear out and jump into the air.

“Ruyue!”

[Un!]

[Taste the power of this king!]

And my suspicion became reality. The hair standing on his body began to shoot out! Although Ruyue immediately formed a barrier around me the moment she was summoned, with the tough and sharp thorn-like hair flooded towards me, the barrier couldn't last long.

When I realized what was happening, I immediately created a lightning storm using Lightning God's power and Peruta Circuit's power. The thorns which lost someone of their strength while penetrating Ruyue's barrier shot towards me.

“Kuuk!”

[KUAAANG!]

My painful scream was immediately drowned out by Nandi's scream. As I struggled to endure the pain and circulated Peruta Circuit, a voice suddenly whispered into my ear.

[Master, I will use my final power.]

This voice was... Nandi! He was surprising respectful!?

[If I use this power, I will disappear. The enemy still has his power, so do not let your guard down, Master.]

Nandi then took a step back, pulling out his horn from the Beast King's body. Meanwhile, I pulled out all the thorns stuck to my body with my whirlpool's power. Nandi and I seemed to have shed more blood just now than the Beast King has in the entire fight. There wasn't a single place that didn't hurt.

But it was even more important to focus on Peruta Circuit now. I gritted my teeth and aimed my spear towards the Beast King.

[Immediately after I use my power, the enemy will be open to attack. Attack then, Master.]

[Thanks, Nandi. Take care of me from now.]

[It is my honor to serve you, as you will walk a path worthy of Shiva's name.]

Suddenly, Nandi began to glow with a bright red light. He immediately caught the Beast King's attention.

[You...! Fine, let's try it!]

The Beast King's mane stood up. At the same time, his body began to glow with a golden light! Meanwhile, I prepared myself to deal a fatal attack.

“Sky God's Rage, Sky God's Play!”

I wanted to use Overlord if possible, but the Beast King wasn't the only enemy I had to face today, and what Ciara said still hung in my mind. In fact, I was hesitant to even use Sky God's Rage. Still, I had no other choice. Otherwise, I couldn't beat him.

Now that I did, I was fully confident in being able to defeat him. All that was left was Nandi's attack and my willpower!

[KUAAAAANG!]

[Then I will see you in a month.]

Nandi's gentlemanly voice, which didn't fit his roar, tickled my ear. With that, Nandi's entire body transformed into a blood-like form and attacked the Beast King. The Beast King also let out a golden roar.

[This is the price you pay for challenging the king of beasts!]

Two giant powers clashed with each other, and spatial rend appeared in this temporary world. With power great enough to overwhelm the power of space, it was possible to break this world created by the dungeon's power!

Unfortunately, as their powers weren't directed at this space but at each other, they couldn't tear through this space. Still, the shock from their clash was immense. The ground fissured uncontrollably and mana turned into radiant crystals from the fierce explosions they caused. It was a scene I had never seen before.

In the end, the Beast King was the only one left standing. From a huge gaping wound on his body, blood endlessly poured out, forming a river of blood from the treeless fissured land. Still, he had survived.

[Kuaaaaaaa! Who dares to stand against me!? Other than him, there is no one that can kill me! Yes, not even the Hero can... Mm?]

He finally seemed to have realized I was missing. He was stronger than the Lava King, but he seemed to be stupider to make up for it.

[... Where did he go? Did he die?]

The Beast King murmured. As I heard him, I couldn't help but grin.

Then, I immediately made my move.

Chapter 287. The Last Member (4)

The 75th Floor Master, Vampire Lord, had a tricky ability. Though he was too weak and died before he could properly utilize his ability, I was different. Even with the same ability, I could show far stronger effects.

The Mistification skill I got from defeating him could be an excellent skill to some, but that didn't apply to me. The skill I was talking about was his unique skill, Blood Curse.

Blood Curse was an extremely simple skill. It was similar to Deathblood Ring's deathblood effect, but its effect was stronger.

It would use my health and splatter my blood onto him. Once the blood entered his body through his wound, its effect would activate. No matter how strong or weak the enemy was, it would decrease all of his stats and make him fall into massive hemorrhage status effect. As it wasn't a normal hemorrhage, but one made from curse and magic, the only way he could break out of it was to kill me. In a way, it was similar to chaos flames.

[Kuk!]

After looking around for a while, he suddenly screamed. At the same time, a vast amount of blood shot out from the wounds Nandi created. It didn't end with just a single explosion, as blood continued to shoot out like it was recycling itself like a fountain. Blood Curse was working perfectly.

[Cough! What is this...!?!]

Sorry, but I'm not done yet. I smiled mischievously and activated the next move. It was Crimson Roar.

[Kuaaaaak!]

That's right! That's the scream I wanted to hear! The Beast King couldn't withstand the fierce flames in his body and jumped in his spot.

[You, you're inside of me!]

Where? I murmured inwardly and smiled mockingly. The Beast King continued to jump around to get me off of him, but I was in a place he could never reach with such movements.

I was flowing through his blood.

[Where are you Hero!? Where!?]

Who in the right mind would tell you? You're the one who set up this trap for me too! I swam through his blood stream and searched for my destination. Suddenly, he stopped jumping around and stood still.

[... Is this that ray's ability?]

I flinched. Although the World Trickery skill I had wasn't stolen from the Hermit King, its name and effect was the same one he had.

After murmuring those words, the Beast King snickered as he bled profusely.

[Foolish. He called himself king, but if his ability was invincible, we wouldn't have been called the Five Kings! You want to use that lowly fish's ability to defeat me?]

He shouted.

[Since you entered my body on your own, stay and become my nutrient!]

Immediately, his body began to boil. The first thing I noticed was that a strong acid began to flow in his blood. Almost like how someone with a cold would heat up to drive away the virus from his body, the Beast King's body was changing to remove me.

[Did you think I would be defenseless, Hero!? I was expecting more from you, what a shame! Or will you try to change your body back!?!]

His internal temperature skyrocketed, and an acidic mana that attacked all foreign substance began to fill up his body. It seemed he had to pay a price for this technique, as with increased blood flow, he began to hemorrhage even more.

[Kuhahahaha! Truly funny! To think the Hero would be such a coward! Who would have thought you were more like the Hermit King than the Lava King!?!]

If the Hermit King transformed himself into a tiny monster and entered the Beast King's body, he would have burned up by now from the temperature or melted from the acid. I was also struggling to withstand these two forces.

[Cough!]

At that moment, the Beast King suddenly coughed. It seemed Blood Curse was still working. Of course, Crimson Roar frying up his insides must have hurt too. No matter how big he was, he couldn't be fine after all that happened. I had to thank Nandi for letting my Blood Curse have such great effect.

[... Not dead yet.]

He murmured.

[He's not dead yet. He's still inside me.]

I grinned. He realized it too late. I had finally arrived at his heart. Specifically, I was inside his heart.

[This isn't the ray's ability.]

In that instant, I detonated the power of Sky God's Rage and drew out Lightning God's power to the limit. My surrounding became dyed in gold. The Beast King let out a horrifying scream.

[Kuaaaaaaaaaaaaaak!]

I then canceled my transformation and looked around as I landed on the bottom of his heart. Lightning God's power and Zeus' power had mixed together and was destroying the Beast King's heart.

This was probably not enough. I held up my Chaotic Spear and struck down with my remaining mana. I couldn't help but marvel at how big the Beast King's heart was, as it had more than enough space to fit my body.

[Kuhaaa! H-How!? How did you survive?]

"What do you mean, how?"

For the first time after I entered his body, I spoke. At this point, I was confident in my victory.

"I became your blood."

Sky God's Play was qualitatively different than World Trickery. Of course, World Trickery surpassed Sky God's Play in its ability to hide my presence. That was how I could carry out this plan.

Combining Sky God's Play and World Trickery had formed a perfect skill.

World Trickery allowed me to transform into any monsters I defeated, and Sky God's Play let me transform into whatever I've seen. The difference between the two was huge.

In Greek mythology, Zeus had once transformed into a golden shower to impregnate a woman trapped in a prison. The transformation power he used was available to me too under the name Sky God's Play. With it, I could transform myself into liquid or even a single drop of blood. The Beast King's response was within my expectations.

There was no way he would burn his own blood or melt himself with his own acid. While he raised his internal temperature and spread his acid, I leisurely swam through his blood stream. The only thing I had to worry about was making sure I wouldn't leave his body through the wounds he was bleeding from.

“Wouldn't this work on the Demon Lord too?”

After thinking about it for a bit, I shook my head. I felt like I wouldn't be able to trick him. The fact that he had a world's power was the biggest reason. Even if World Trickery hid my presence, there had to be a limit to pretending to be someone else's blood. Just like how I noticed Hermit King's presence at the end, the Demon Lord was sure to be capable of doing so.

[Kuk, kuaaaaak! I, I should have listened to him!]

“Oh? And what did he say?”

Really, he was taking too long to die. I converted the remaining mana in my body into lightning and pushed it into my spear. Peruta Circuit roiled, and my spear immediately penetrated his heart, releasing lightning.

[Kuaaaaak!]

Damned guy, couldn't he have said more before he died? In the end, the lightning from the spear burst his heart, and that was the end of the Beast King.

“Ku, I better focus, or I'll get swept away again.”

I had to directly face the flood of blood pouring from his heart. Setting aside how dirty it was, did I have to travel through his blood again to get out? No, since he died, was his blood even flowing?

In any case, I had to get out and join up with the rest of the party as quickly as possible. It hasn't been too long, so there should be no problem. I just had to quickly... quickly...?

“... Eh?”

I blinked. My body felt strange. Don't tell me his acid was

affecting me now? Or if that wasn't it, did he leave a curse before he died?

The Beast King's blood drenching me was boiling. Not only that, but the large amount of his blood I had no choice but to drink was boiling inside my stomach. It was almost as if he was roaring out.

“Is this dangerous?”

An alarm went off in my head. Did I cancel my transformation too early? No, if I didn't, I would have had to wait dozens of minutes slowly releasing lightning. I needed to get out of here as quickly as possible, and even if I didn't, I didn't feel like it was a mistake to untransform as I initially planned.

Besides, didn't his blood drench me after he died? Just what was going on?

All I knew was that this situation wasn't something I could control. I couldn't believe how helpless I felt without Sherafina's messages telling me about my status.

‘Snap out of it, Kang Shin. You can't rely on the dungeon forever.’

In the worst case, I just needed to use Overlord. That power was enough to get me through most situations. Not to mention, the Beast King was dead, so there was no one who could cause me harm. Even when the Hermit King died, I received his ability in

exchange for his soul, and when the Lava King died... Wait.

“... Wow.”

I couldn't help but speak even in this situation. I hadn't noticed because I was too focused on myself, but now that I looked, the Beast King's insides were letting out a bright golden light. He was certainly dead. This wasn't done by him.

It was done by me.

“Right, it was then.”

When I obtained the Hermit King's power, I had taken his power for my own. I still wasn't sure, but perhaps when Peruta Circuit reforged my body, it may have taken this part of my memory and incorporated it to my instincts. Right, I knew instinctively that there was a better way to do it. Just like how the Lava King, Hermit King, and the Beast King had developed unique ways of defending themselves, my body had also developed a way to grow stronger!

If I were under the effect of the dungeon's system, Sherafina would have surely told me about the method herself. But now that I was on my own, my body was looking for this method by itself. Its efficiency was incomparable to having it spoonfed to my body.

Peruta Circuit's spin became fiercer. My body was burning up, and it felt like Peruta Circuit's mana circuit was trying to burst out

of my body. A whirlpool rose up around my body and began to slowly absorb the golden particles of light. The Beast King's body slowly transformed into golden particles of light and began to slowly flow into me. The spinning whirlpool began to turn golden and created even fiercer rotational force.

“AAAAAAAAAAAAAH!”

I shouted, unable to withstand the power filling up my body. With my shout, the process accelerated. The Beast King's body completely transformed into mana and flowed into me, and I held my mind tightly to not waste a single drop of it.

Sorry, Daisy, it looks like you won't get the Beast King's corpse... Hopefully you'll get the King of the Dead!

Some time later, I slowly opened my eyes. With how much mana flowed into me, I couldn't turn them all into mine, but this wasn't the first time I experienced receiving such a massive amount of mana. Just like before, I stockpiled the unprocessed mana in a corner of my body.

I looked around. I was still in the jungle.

“The corpse really disappeared.”

I was dumbfounded. Such a huge corpse that disappeared without leaving a trace. Now, he was inside me. I could feel it. Interestingly, the result of me entering his body was him entering

mine.

“Huu... Sadly, it looks like I’m missing one of his abilities.”

The Beast King used his incomparably powerful body and his powerful acid as his main weapons. Additionally, he could add powerful physical force to his roars. I had received all of his abilities other than his acid ability. I could tell how to use them like they were mine to begin with.

Most importantly, even though my stats were still being restrained, I could tell how much stronger my bones, muscles, and skin have gotten. I grinned and smacked my body a few times.

“I heard there’s a hole to fly through even when the sky crumbles. To think Peruta Circuit would bring such a result.”

Perhaps, it wasn’t just Peruta Circuit brining about these changes. After all, Peruta had never told me about any of this.

It was entirely possible that another power was using Peruta Circuit as a medium to act... No, I was probably overthinking it. In any case, I could think about this later. What I was sure about was that starting with Radiance, I was slowly strengthening myself with powers that no one could take away. Knowing that was enough.

“Good, now if I hide his mana completely...”

I calmed the boiling Beast King's mana. Then, the surrounding space began to distort. The Event Dungeon was disappearing, having lost its power to maintain itself. What filled my sight instead was Bordeaux's sky. Coincidentally, I faced Licorice as soon as I left the Event Dungeon.

When she saw me, she hugged me with a happy face.

“Dear Husband, I knew you would be safe! Dear Husbaaaand!”

“Yeah, Licorice, I knew I would be safe too.”

I felt relieved and joked. Thankfully, everything seemed okay. Ciara had worried for nothing. Although the Beast King was troubling, I could kill him without much problem, and now that I had joined up with the rest, we could go kill the King of the Dead and the last remaining king together...

At that moment, Licorice tilted her head and asked.

“Where's Hwaya? Why didn't she come out with you?”

“... What?”

I froze.

Chapter 288. The Last Member (5)

“Hwaya? What do you mean!?”

“Dear Husband was the only one that went in, and Hwaya followed in right after. After that, the gate closed and no one could enter... Eh? D-Dear Husband!”

Licorice who was recounting what happened after I entered the dungeon suddenly pointed behind me with a shocked expression. When I turned around, a grey shadowy circle made its appearance.

It was a gate.

“What’s happening now?”

I murmured astonished. Next to me, Licorice asked carefully.

“Dear Husband, did you really clear the dungeon?”

“I didn’t just clear the dungeon. For a moment, I even had the right over it! I killed one of the kings and...”

Suddenly, I felt thunderstruck. I recalled what the Beast King said, that all kings had come out this time. In that case, there could only be one answer.

“This is a different dungeon.”

With that, I quickly reached out to the gate. However, an unbelievable power flung my hand back. Daisy approached me silently.

“No use. Not even a god’s power, could break it.”

“You used yours?”

“Just one. To fight the King of the Dead, I saved the others.”

Daisy’s had an unusual worried tone. She touched my arms and face, then spoke with a relieved face.

“I thought you and Hwaya were both trapped... I was worried.”

It felt like this was the first time Daisy ever said something like this. If she used a god’s power to try to break in, I could understand how worried she was. When I thought about how Daisy might be more concerned about us than I previously thought, I suddenly felt touched.

“Thanks, Daisy. I’m safe and I even killed a king. Though... There weren’t any survivors.”

“What about, Hwaya?”

“It looks like she’s in another dungeon. There were two gates in

the same location.”

Once I entered the Beast King’s gate, it shut itself off to prevent anyone else from entering. Hwaya quickly jumped into the gate in front of her, but that gate had been a different gate all along.

Did they plan on separating me and Hwaya from the very beginning? When the thought crossed my mind, a chill went down my back. The Beast King underestimated me and was taken out, but there was no guarantee that the other kings would do the same. More importantly, I could see the prudence of the existence controlling the kings. He was undoubtedly the one who came up with this plan to separate our forces.

When the day I had to face him came, I... No, now wasn’t the time to be thinking about this.

“Kang Shin, are you okay?”

“... No, sorry.”

Was Hwaya safe? How much time passed since she entered the dungeon? How strong was the other king? I just had too many questions.

“Worried about Hwaya?”

“Obviously! ... Sorry for shouting. I’m just thinking about something.”

“Un, it’s okay.”

Daisy was staring at me calmly and that helped me calm down. Meanwhile, the plane carrying other Revival members came down above the gate. Ina who was waiting inside jumped into my arms with a teary face.

“Daddy!”

“Yeah, yeah.”

“Mommy went—”

“I know, Mommy’s in the dungeon, right?”

“Un! But I can’t go in. I tried to use Skadi’s power, but Daisy said not to.”

Daisy knew it would be of no use. I consoled Ina who was tearing up.

“When did Hwaya go in exactly?”

“13 minutes 27 seconds.”

“If it’s Hwaya, she should be holding on... Damn it, we don’t

even know who's inside!"

I examined the gate again and saw several traces of Daisy's power. Did she use a decomposing ability? A part of the gate was dug in. If a god's power could only do this much, how were we supposed to force this gate open? How?

"Maybe with Shiva's Eye..."

"Let's find another method. If Kang Shin uses that, we'll save Hwaya, but we'll all die to the Demon Lord."

"..."

Ciara's prophecy wasn't absolute. Still, with her eyes open, Ciara's ability was incomparable to before. Although she didn't know all kings had come out, she still saw the existence of two kings and their identities. It was likely that I really needed Shiva's Eye to fight the Demon Lord.

Damn it! What use was there to obtaining the power of the Destruction God Shiva!? Once per year? How was I supposed to use something like that!?

... Wait.

"I need to go to the dungeon."

I suddenly thought of something. Without a moment of hesitation, I opened the gate to the First Dungeon. Before I entered, however, Daisy shook her head.

“I already went. Right now, can’t contact other administrative guilds. Dungeon is very busy.”

“Have you gone to Fairy Garden?”

“Fairy Garden? I don’t know, how to get to that place.”

“Alright, that’s fine. I’ll tell you later.”

I left Ina to Licorice and jumped into the dungeon. Then, I rushed to Fairy Garden.

[Prince-nim!]

[He’s gotten even stronger!]

[That day must be coming closer!]

[Ah, he’s coming here!]

“Guys, where’s Loretta?”

[Pavilion!]

[She's at the Pavilion!]

The elements seemed to have noticed that I was in a hurry, as they answered quickly without joking around. I pictured Fairy Garden's pavilion in my head and walked forward. Soon, Loretta and over ten other Fairy Garden members appeared in front of me. Loretta's ear perked up, somehow realizing I had arrived.

“Shin-nim!”

“Loretta, do you know what's happening on Earth right now?”

“Ah, r-right now, a world is on the brink of ruin, so we're pressed for time... Did something happen on Earth?”

I held myself back from letting out a deep sigh. This wasn't Loretta's fault. We were just unlucky! Meanwhile, Loretta stealthily passed the document in front of her to the man sitting next to her.

“Noonim! I already have my hands full!”

It was Lin.

“Take care of it, Guild Master. Noona's got a business to take care of.”

“Uuuuuk, fine!”

“Shin-nim, tell me.”

Loretta quickly pushed her work away and approached me. I felt like I should apologize for bothering her, but I was too much in a rush to waste time with small talk. I explained the current situation as quickly as possible. Event Dungeons that completely surpassed Sherafina’s control, dungeons that trapped one person inside and how to break into them.

After hearing about the full story, Loretta’s expression stiffened.

“Impossible, there’s no way they can ignore the dungeon’s power to that extent.”

“It’s the truth, Loretta.”

“That isn’t just ignoring the dungeon’s power, that’s using the dungeon’s power for themselves! Whether it’s demons or Five Kings or whoever, there’s no way that’s possible!”

“Loretta.”

“S-Sorry.”

When I called her voice solemnly, Loretta drooped her ears and head. But right now, I didn’t even have time to accept her apology.

“What do we need to do to go in?”

“Go in? The dungeon’s power doesn’t work against them. Not even Lord can do anything about it.”

“What if we’re not using the dungeon’s power? For example, will Shiva’s Eye be able to open the gate?”

After thinking about it for a bit, Loretta placed her hand on my forehead. As I knew what she was trying to do, I recalled what I felt from touching the gate and transferred it to her. Loretta then nodded.

“Most likely yes, but if what Shin-nim says is true, that power is needed to fight the Demon Lord...”

“Then let me ask again. Is there an explorer in the dungeon with a power rivaling Shiva’s Eye?”

When she heard this, Loretta seemed to freeze. Not even a second later, she glared at me sharply.

“... Shin-nim had this in mind before coming here, right?”

“Yes.”

“I didn’t want to see him again...”

“Then let me go alone. I just thought I should tell Loretta before going over.”

I didn't have time. Since Loretta affirmed my plan, I just needed to act. When I turned around to head off, Loretta grabbed my shoulder.

“Let me go too. I can help convince him.”

“But Loretta.”

“I'm indifferent now. I just didn't want to see his face again. Or, do you doubt me, Shin-nim?”

“Of course not. I just didn't want to force Loretta to see someone Loretta didn't want...”

“Let me go. It'll be better that way.”

Loretta spoke with a stiff expression. I looked into her eyes and lightly nodded.

“Master, are you leaving?”

Sikatra asked Loretta. Loretta held up her hand holding onto mine and retorted.

“I already passed my official authority to Lin. You’ll be fine without me, right?”

“There won’t be any problem to our work, but that still goes against Lord’s rule. Master, are you prepared for her punishment?”

“Yeah, I am, so let me do what I want for now.”

“Fine. Tell that person I said hi.”

Perhaps Sikatra wanted to create this series of events. Somewhat understanding her intentions, I lightly bowed to Sikatra. She also smiled and nodded back. Immediately afterwards, Loretta and I left Fairy Garden and headed to Beyond’s Residential Area.

Right, there was one candidate I had in mind as someone with equal power to Shiva.

Beyond’s first explorer.

“As you might already know, he has Odin’s power.”

“Odin.”

“Odin isn’t just famous on Earth. He has great influence in other worlds, just like Greek gods do on Earth.”

“I knew it.”

“Gungnir should have enough power. If he sets his target to the king, it can probably deal critical damage to him even after breaking through the gate.”

“That’s nice to know.”

With that, we both saved our breath. It was enough to know what power he had. Not long afterwards, we arrived in front of a giant castle. It was still the eerie place it was before, letting out fluffy ominous aura.

When we neared the castle’s gate, a message rang out in my ear. He had detected our presence.

[You didn’t bother me all this time. Why have you come again, Third Explorer?]

His voice was still dark, but it carried a calamitous charm. I could tell now that his charm was on a similar level as mine.

Wait, then did my voice also sound like this to others? I held back my uneasiness and spoke.

[I have a favor to ask of you.]

[The answer is no. Go back.]

He cut down my request instantly. This rude little bastard... I gritted my teeth and was about to ask again, when Loretta placed her hand on the metal gate and asked.

[I came to ask you for a favor, Kain Zerahard.]

Even though she wasn't a Beyond explorer, her voice was ringing out in Beyond's explorer communication channel. It was to be expected from Fairy Garden's guild master.

The moment the first explorer heard Loretta's voice, his voice trembled.

[You're... Loretta?]

[Yes, I'm Loretta... Shin-nim needs your help. Please listen to him.]

[No, I'm... Go back.]

[You must listen to him... I hope you remember, you are indebted to us, to me.]

I couldn't raise my head. I knew things were going to turn out this way, but I was too embarrassed to face Loretta. Uuu, to save Hwaya, I was forcing Loretta to threaten her first love. If I die, I

was sure to go to hell...!

[... I see, he is your...]

[Yes. I have never resented the fact that I have to stay in the dungeon this much.]

[I see... In that case, there's no other choice.]

That was it. We didn't need to convince him anymore. He accepted my request just by Loretta asking for a favor. I was too afraid to think about what debt he owed to Loretta, or how much burden this put on Loretta.

The iron gate, which had stayed closed for hundreds of years, opened this easily. A wide garden appeared beyond it, and we could see the door to his castle.

[Come in. I'll at least hear you out.]

The dungeon's strongest explorer was welcoming me.

Chapter 289. The Last Member (6)

Loretta and I entered the castle without hesitation. As I somewhat understood where he was, I led Loretta and walked through the castle's hall, feeling his boundless mana in the surroundings.

Mm, this is...

“He has two true names, huh.”

When I murmured, Loretta tilted her head curiously.

“Two? That's impossible. Kain... Kain Zerahard only has one true name.”

“No, he has two. He either hid one, or he must have obtained one afterwards.”

[I'm surprised you found out.]

After his voice rang out in the communication channel, a wall in the hallway rose up like a curtain. Almost like a hidden room from the movies, beyond the wall was a small room.

Kain Zerahar greeted us, half lying on a giant sofa that seemed to serve as his bed.

“You’re...”

When he saw me, he opened his mouth, then closed it soon after. I took this time to examine him closer.

The first thing I noticed was his clothes. Translucent silk-like clothing covered his body, shining with all sorts of colors. The tiny bit of skin he showed on his neck showed how pale he was.

He had a long and slender neckline, and he was beautiful enough to be considered a woman. I thought Lin was pretty, but Kain Zerahard even surpassed Lin. Left alone for a long time, his hair was longer than an average girl’s and that seemed to add to his charm. I finally opened my mouth.

“How handsome.”

“Indeed, you’re handsome.”

Almost as if he was copying me, Kain Zerahard commented on my appearance at the same time. Realizing that we talked over each other, we both closed our mouth. An awkward silence descended.

... I began to doubt whether Loretta judged people based on their appearance.

Soon, he eyed Loretta and spoke briefly.

“It’s been a while.”

“Yes, it’s been a while.”

That was it. It must have been centuries from the last time they saw each other! Of course, I wasn’t generous enough to happily watch Loretta talk to her first love, and since Hwaya must be fighting one of the kings even now, I moved the conversation forward.

“My comrade... A precious person of mine is in a life-or-death situation where a single second is important. Please, your power can save her. We need Odin’s Gungnir.”

“So you want me to use Gungnir?”

“Yes. If you want something in return, I would be happy to anything as long as it’s within my ability.”

Even as I spoke, I knew in the corner of my mind that he wouldn’t accept this request. He had lived in a secret room of his castle for centuries while hiding having a god’s true name. I felt like I knew what this meant.

Even so, I came to see him because I had a card in hand. In the process of coming to meet him, I became certain of its usefulness.

“I refuse. There’s nothing I want.”

As expected, he replied instantly.

“There’s nothing you want?”

“That’s right. Everything I want disappeared long ago, and there’s no way to turn back time.”

‘As I thought.’ I murmured inwardly. As I had heard about him from Loretta and others, I knew what he meant.

He was the last survivor of his world. In other words, he abandoned his dying world and escaped with the world’s power. It had to have been hundreds of years ago.”

“You should know what I mean. What do you think I’m doing right now?”

“You’re hiding.”

“Right, I’m hiding.”

When was the last time he moved his body? He raised his long and thin fingers.

“I lost everything I had to protect and escaped cursing

everything. As I have no right to live, I'm simply waiting for death to come take my life. Unfortunately, my boundless mana won't allow me to die easily, so I've been waiting for a long time. Perhaps, I'll have to wait eternally."

"I don't think I'll be able to change your mind... but you're wrong."

Loretta spoke out. Her voice was filled with faint anger.

"Do you see me, Kain? Do you see what all administrative guilds are doing? If you help, we can save countless others who are in the same position as you. Even just a little bit would have been fine. The dungeon always cheered you on, and everyone supported you. But you..."

"You don't understand, Loretta."

"What don't I understand!? I experienced the same things you have! Everything I wanted to protect! Everyone I wanted to protect! I lost everything that supported me! Parents, siblings, friends, comrades! My world and all lives living in it! You're telling me I still don't understand!?"

"I lost the woman I love, the one person I cared for more than the entire world."

At his calm tone, Loretta retorted in a frighteningly quiet voice.

“Yes, if there was one thing I didn’t understand, it was the feeling of losing a lover. Is that why you taught it to me? How kind of you.”

“...”

“I didn’t want to make Heroes of other worlds face the same reality I did. That’s why I accepted Lord’s offer and helped create the dungeon. I create pathways to countless worlds being attacked by worlds’ enemies and helped explorers walk the right path. At first, you were one of them, Kain.”

All explorers were indebted to the dungeon. There was no doubt about it. By entering the dungeon, we obtained the power to resist our enemies, and we grew stronger by relying on the dungeon’s power.

But Kain holed up in Beyond’s Residential Area with the power he received. Simply put, he had washed his mouth clean after being treated. Even after hundreds of years, he was the strongest explorer. If he joined an administrative guild or worked as a Dimensional Mercenary during this time, he could have saved many worlds from ruin.

Still.

“He’s not obligated to do anything, Loretta. No one can force someone to do something... Even if Loretta did in the past.”

“Yes, I was the one who disappointed myself. Because I believed in him, I received more shock when I realized the truth.”

Through Kain, Loretta learned that excessive trust only led to her getting hurt.

... How she acted in an inexplicably exaggerated manner around me and how she told me to escape if things got hard surely had something to do with her trauma from this incident. Because she didn't want to be hurt, she had lowered her expectations.

To be honest, it was quite absurd. This weakness and softness shouldn't have been the charm she felt from me.

“... Loretta, there's something us guys have to talk about.”

I spoke out before she became more emotional. Not only Loretta, but Kain Zerahard also widened his eyes. It seemed he didn't expect me to do this.

“There's nothing else I need to hear. I just wanted to see what you were going to say. If you know my circumstance, you should know I only have one answer for you.”

“Kain, help Shin-nim! You should be able to do this much! It's not like you'll suffer a loss... Ubub!?”

I blocked Loretta's mouth.

“Loretta, thank you for helping me get here. You did what you needed to. From now, I’ll be fine on my own. I can convince him.”

“S-Shin-nim...!?”

Loretta made a funny expression like she couldn’t understand what I was thinking. Although her flapping ears were adorable, as I wasn’t in the best place to show her my affection, I simply nodded my head for now.

“Leave it to me.”

“... Y-Yes.”

In the end, Loretta nodded with a flushed face.

“T-Then I’ll see you later. I’ll go back for now! Kain, Sikatra says hi! Make sure you help Shin-nim!”

Loretta then turned around and left as she frantically fanned her reddened face. Seeing her leave quietly, Kain muttered.

“Thanks.”

“It’s nothing you should be thankful about. I love her and she loves me. That’s all there is to it.”

“... You’re right.”

After murmuring in agreement, he spoke up with a stiff voice.

“But I still refuse.”

“Really?”

“There’s nothing you can say that’ll convince me. Leave me be.”

“Is it the feeling of loss that’s controlling you?”

“No, it might have been for the first two hundred years, but it’s been a long time since I got over that.”

After hearing him, I took a quick breath. Then, I quickly added.

“Then it’s the feeling of helplessness.”

Kain’s eyes widened slightly. It wasn’t a laughable situation, but I couldn’t help but grin slightly.

“Are you ready to talk to me now?”

“You’re a rookie who just entered Beyond... You know about it?”

“I don’t mean to brag, but I’m about to enter Beyond’s 31st floor. I’m on the First Dungeon’s 81st floor too.”

Though I was the one who said it, I felt proud. I had come this far. So many things had happened on the way, and thankfully, I had grasped onto many things without letting them go.

It seemed I wasn’t the only one who thought this way, as Kain spoke dumbfoundedly.

“... You already surpassed me in Beyond. In such a short time too... Are you really human?”

“I’ve been doubting it recently, but I was indeed a human when I was born.”

“Talent... Is this what they call talent? How ridiculous. In my long life, this is the first time I’ve seen someone like you.”

I smiled at his murmuring.

“Of course, compared to the years you’ve lived, mine must feel as light as a feather. But Kain, ah, I can call you Kain, right?”

“You have the qualifications.”

“Kain, my feather is a bit big. Perhaps, it’s so big that even you

won't be able to see it in its full."

My Evil Eyes were shining on their own. Depending on their user's mood, Evil Eyes sometimes activated on their own. That was one of the flaws of Evil Eyes, but it didn't matter as Kain was not so weak as to be affected by my Evil Eyes.

"Let's talk, Kain, as quickly as possible if possible. I promise to give you something I can give, so lend me your power."

"Something you can give... you say."

"How I can be so certain even after realizing the same thing you have. That's what I can give you."

Sorry, but I can't guarantee anything. I'm just doing my best.

Kain also saw through my little bluff, but surprisingly, he broke out in a smile.

"I can see why Loretta fell for you."

He got up. His hair fluttered, and even after hundreds of years, his silk clothes covered his body softly and tightly. After standing on his feet perfectly, he took a light breath and infused life into his body.

Then, he stared at me.

“Let’s hear it then. No one can bother us here, so rest easy and show me your everything.”

“My pleasure.”

And that’s what I did.

With that, Kain joined Revival.

Chapter 290. The Last Member (7)

Once he decided to enter Revival, he immediately held his hair by the middle. In an instant, he cut his hair.

His hair that was once too long to bother to measure was now slightly above his waist. I still thought his hair was too long for a man, but he seemed satisfied with himself as he picked up the hair he cut off and imbued mana into it.

“Today, I will only use Gungnir. Show me your and your guild’s power. Prove to me the potential of your offer.”

“... Fine.”

It didn’t take long for his several hundred year of hair to come together in the form of a spear. As it continued to take in Kain’s mana, the spear became metallic, and I was honestly impressed.

“Wow.”

He swung it around a few times then nodded.

“It should have enough power for a one-time use.”

“It’s more than enough. What a monstrous amount of mana.”

“For several hundred years, leftover mana stockpiled on part of

my body I didn't need. Alright, let's go to Earth."

He slowly walked forward and stepped out of his room. Even though he was just wearing a single layer of clothes, he was giving off an imposing aura akin to an dominating emperor.

Still, he was an ally of an equal standing. No matter how pressured I felt inwardly, I acted fine on the outside as I returned to Earth. Obviously, we came out at the spot I entered the dungeon. In other words, we were right in front of the gate.

"Ah, Shin!"

"Sorry, Ye-Eun. We might not have enough time left, so we should hurry."

While Ye-Eun and other Revival members looked at the good-looking man accompanying me in shock, I forced them to stand back. It seemed Kain didn't plan on dragging things out either. As soon as he located the gate's entrance, he narrowed his eyes and nodded.

"It's more powerful than I thought. Using the dungeon's power? A lot has changed since hundreds of years ago."

"Or maybe, nothing changed at all."

My comment made him pause for a moment. Soon, he snickered and nodded.

“Right, I was mistaken. So, about entering that thing... Simply put, it’s impossible.”

“What!?”

Didn’t Loretta say Gungnir would be able to break through the gate? Did I trust her too much!? Seeing me shocked, Kain shook his head.

“I meant it’s impossible with just Gungnir. I’ll need to add Sleipnir’s power.”

“...”

I knew he was helping me, but I wasn’t particularly happy with him purposely messing with me in such an important situation. When I eyed him sharply, he quickly continued.

“I’ll open it with Gungnir and send one in with Sleipnir. Only one person can go in.”

“I’ll go.”

If only one could go, it obviously had to be me. I couldn’t leave it to anyone else. I might have asked Father if he had a god’s true name, but he didn’t. There were many that tried to convince me and Daisy was surprisingly the most adamant.

“I’ll go. Kang Shin, you already fought. Too tired.”

“Don’t worry, I got an upgrade to make up for it. You should be feeling it too, right?”

“You used god’s power.”

“You used it too. I should go. Plus, we need your ability to fight the King of the Dead.”

“What if Kang Shin gets hurt?”

“I’m worried about Mommy, but also Daddy. I want to go too.”

“I’ll be fine. Ina too, stay here with the others.”

While I convinced everyone, Kain activated Odin’s power. When Odin’s power descended on the spear he made with his hair, the hair became larger and longer, and materialized aura rose up from it.

“Sleipnir moves in an instant. The moment I shoot Gungnir, I’ll summon Sleipnir, so hold onto it immediately.”

“I don’t plan on losing to anyone in speed, so don’t worry.”

He nodded. I looked back at the others one last time and shouted.

“Keep your eyes on St. Peter’s Basilica. We don’t know what’s going to happen. Daisy, if they attack us first, we might not be able to open our inventory, so have your Laki out. Everyone else, don’t forget about what I told you!”

“Don’t worry, Son. Your father’s here.”

Father grinned and smacked my shoulder.

“So relax and go save my daughter.”

“Gungnir!”

The moment Father finished his sentence, Kain shot his Gungnir. The spear, told by myths to always hit its target, left Kain’s hand and was sucked into the gate. Soon, the gate swirled and a huge hole appeared. Immediately afterwards, the eight-legged horse Kain summoned charged towards the hole. I use Divine Speed and quickly jumped on top of it.

It seemed there was an unseen connection between Gungnir and Sleipnir, as the hole which was closing itself after Gungnir entered suddenly enlarged itself when Sleipnir neared. Along with a feeling of being devoured by the gate, I was sucked in. Sleipnir didn’t stop and continued to run.

The gate’s inside was completely dark. The sky was full of black

storm clouds, and black monsters that seemed to be minions of the gate's king filled up the sky. Compared to the Beast King's simple jungle environment, the current scene was far more pressuring.

[Kuhuk!]

The first thing I heard was a scream. Seemingly flying at the speed of light above Sleipnir, I surveyed the area. In front of me... was something gigantic.

“What's that?”

First, I jumped off of Sleipnir. It didn't slow down in the slightest and continued to charge before piercing through something giant. Again, a thunderous scream rang out.

[How did you get in!?!]

Clearly, that giant was the one who screamed. I thought about what he was, but I couldn't ascertain his shape. How was that possible? He was in front of my eyes, but I couldn't capture his form?

“Shin!”

Thankfully, I could capture Hwaya's voice. As I summoned Sharana, I used Talaria and flew towards the direction of her voice.

“Hwaya!”

It was thanks to Gungnir and Sleipnir buying us time. Currently, that giant was busy screaming out in pain and didn't seem to care about attacking us. Relieved that Hwaya was fine, I immediately flew towards her.

Upon closer inspection, however, she wasn't 'fine.' Her battle dress was torn up and she was full of wounds. Still, she still had all her limbs.

When Hwaya saw me, she widened her eyes. I stopped next to her and asked.

“Are you safe?”

She shouted back.

“That's what I want to ask! You were alone with a king! What happened!?”

“I killed him.”

“I see... Thank goodness.”

Hwaya drooped her body. Her teary eyes told me what she was currently feeling, but I didn't say anything.

She continued.

“I knew you must have entered by yourself too... I was so worried.”

“You were alone with a king too!”

“I can die, but if you die...!”

“Hwaya, there isn't anyone that 'can' die.”

I spoke firmly as I took out my Chaotic Spear. That giant existence with an indeterminate form had finished writhing and was turning its head towards us. I had no clue where to attack him, but Gungnir and Sleipnir had caused him to scream. If he had an immortal body, he wouldn't have done so. I knew there had to be a way to injure him.

Moreover, in the end, he was one of the Five Kings. Just like the Beast King said, if one of them were vastly superior to the others, they wouldn't have been called the Five Kings. There may have been an hierarchy amongst them, but the difference wasn't huge. I had already defeated the Beast King. Now, Hwaya was with me too.

I reaffirmed my resolve and spoke for both Hwaya and myself to hear.

“We're going to survive until the end, Hwaya. Stay with me until the end.”

“Until the end? I’ll be with you until the end?”

I looked back at her. For some reason, her eyes were strangely out of focus.

“Shin, you aren’t interested in me anyways. That elf is the only one... You won’t accept me anyways.”

“No.”

“... Eh?”

“I’ll accept you.”

With that, I turned around and prepared myself for battle. The large flock of monsters in the air glared at us and shot towards us like rain. Seeing how each of them surpassed SS rank, I released my Evil Eyes.

Half of the monsters turned to stone, but more than half remained unpetrified. Next to me, Hwaya raised her hands and burned up the monsters with flames at a terrifying temperature.

“Y-You’ll accept me... But in the past, you...!”

“The way I think has changed since then... And what you mean to me changed too...”

Countless number of worlds and countless number of enemies. I undoubtedly had a long journey ahead of me with my current comrades. Some of them may quit when Earth became safe, but I felt that most wouldn't.

Coincidentally, there wasn't just camaraderie between us. For a long time, I was ignorant of their feelings or I had pretended to be ignorant. But now, it was hard to gloss over them. Seeing Loretta and Kain, I realized something.

I was no longer just an ordinary Korean person. I wasn't even an ordinary Earthling. Considering all the things I had to do I couldn't restrain myself under the name of Earth. If I had to pick a name, it would be explorer. Or maybe, savior was better. So I didn't need to restrict myself to Earth's common sense. I couldn't.

Accepting only Loretta, but still brining other female members around to other worlds. I couldn't do something like that. I had finally decided, and now that I have, I didn't plan on hesitating. Imagining Lin's grinning face irked me, but I had no other choice.

[You killed the other king! And you came to find me! Kahahaha, that lion died! Interesting, yes, very interesting!]

The king roared. In an instant, I somewhat found out what his ability was. He didn't control high-temperature lava, he didn't have the ability to conceal himself from the world, he didn't have mountainous power or control toxic acid, nor did he control corpses. He controlled emotions of all creations.

His voice caused ripples in people's hearts. Even the most powerful warriors or the most powerful magicians were mere humans when their mentalities broke down. This king had the ability to break down even the most strong-minded individual and bring him to ruin.

I was surprised that Hwaya was alive after facing off against someone like him for dozens of minutes. At the same time, I understood why Hwaya would say something she never would normally. When I realized it, a chill went down my back.

Hwaya was reaching her limit. If I came just a bit later...

“Hwaya, are you okay?”

I resisted the effect of the king's voice with Absolute Soul's power and asked Hwaya. I was thinking it might be better to make her faint. But for some reason, Hwaya's answer was a bit strange.

“Yeah... I'm fine, I'm extremely fine.”

I turned around. Hwaya's cheeks were bright red like she was a volcano about to erupt.

“Are you really fine!?”

“I'm so fine I don't know what to do!”

Hwaya shouted. She certainly didn't sound fine!

"I feel like I can kill him on my own!"

"Hwaya, calm down!"

"I won't die, Shin! I don't want to die!"

Hwaya's eyes shone with a fearsome light. In that instant, a fiery blaze shot up above the incoming minions. They were flames of a truly colossal scale. Thinking about how Hwaya still had such firepower, a feeling of respect rose up within me.

Hwaya spread her arms out and shouted.

"I'm so happy right now and I'm sure more happy things will come in the future! How can I die now!?"

"Hwaya, you..."

"Let's survive until the end, Shin! Until the end, crushing through all these bastards!"

Perhaps unhappy that Hwaya got her spirit back, the king led his formless body towards us. Just this made my heart drop a beat. Great despair that I had overcome until now with hope for the future suddenly rose up in my head.

A great fear laid its gaze on us.

[Come, Hero. Your body defeated the Beast King. Let's see if you can withstand in front of my fear!]

The battle between us and the fear-ruling king had now begun.

Chapter 291. The Last Member (8)

I bit my lips and drew Absolute Soul's power to the peak. Absolute Soul was the most important skill to prevent his fear from invading my consciousness, especially in this place where the dungeon's power was restricted. Even a single mistake could lead to death.

“Do you have any information on him? Like his weakness?”

“He's the Fear King. He's adept at mental attacks, but his physical body is weak! To make up for it, his army has terrifying physical strength.”

“His physical body?”

Since Gungnir and Sleipnir pierced through him seamlessly, Hwaya was most likely right. But since he was moving just fine after being hit by two of Odin's powers, I could deduce that he had high health even if his defense was low.

“I don't know if you noticed, Shin, but normal attacks can't hurt him at all.”

“Normal attacks?”

“Everything other than Evil Eyes or true names' powers.”

I widened my eyes. If this was true...

“I shouldn’t have used Trishula.”

Would elementals or Lightning God’s power work? No, I doubt it. Hwaya said her flames didn’t work. Of course, there were also ranks among elementals. There was one I had expectations of. Not to mention, I haven’t used Overlord yet for this moment.

Still, it was a troubling situation. Overlord had a time limit of just 5 minutes, so I had to kill him in that time. Overlord wasn’t a power to initiate battle, but a power to end one.

“I’ll do it, Shin.”

Hwaya smiled.

“My Evil Eyes work on him.”

“But Hwaya.”

“Shin, you just support me so I can focus all my attention on him. You can do it, right?”

“That much is easy... Will you be okay?”

“Shin, you defeated two kings by yourself. If I don’t defeat even

one, my Witch title would cry.”

I wondered where her anxious self from a moment ago went. Now, she was full of energy. The wounds on her body was also disappearing one by one. I didn’t know whether it was her Evil Eyes’ power, or if she had a power I didn’t know about.

Or maybe, just like how I mastered Peruta Circuit and overcame my limit, she might have just overcome her limit.

“One of us has to handle those small fries anyways. It’s perfect.”

“... Fine. I’ll put them all to sleep and come help you. I have a plan in mind too.”

“Good. Then... I’m off!”

With that, Hwaya immediately disappeared. She didn’t disappear literally. It was just that she moved extremely fast. In just a breath’s time, she was facing the Fear King and shouting gallantly.

“You lump of tar, fight me again!”

[You were almost finished just a moment ago. Now, you’re surprisingly fine.]

“Don’t be stupid. When I knelt back then, it was to help propel myself forward!”

Flames shot up from Hwaya's body, burning fiercely like a pillar connecting sky and earth. Good. It seemed Hwaya would be fine. In that case, I could focus on my role – dealing with the army of fear filling up this world.

[He is the Hero.]

[A Hero aiming for a higher peak.]

[Even he has darkness in his heart. I can see it.]

“You're too noisy!”

I materialized Ruyue and Sharana. I could fly using Talaria, but even if I couldn't, I learned to stay afloat effortlessly without using any other abilities when I mastered Peruta Circuit. So it was fine even if Sharana was separated from me.

[Shin, what should I do?]

[Master, just give your command!]

“Ruyue, you protect me. Sharana, you support Hwaya! Amplify her flames and protect her from other small fries!”

[Gladly!]

[Understood, Master!]

Sharana immediately flew off to protect Hwaya, and Ruyue spun around me in her beastgirl form. Meanwhile, the Fear King's minions were endlessly spawning in the air.

“Ah, so that's how it is.”

These guys were the Fear King's clones. That's what my intuition was telling me. Although the Fear King's real subordinates might be hiding among them, most of them were giving off identical aura to the Fear King. In fact, the entire area we were in was...

[Scared?]

[Are you scared of my power?]

[Despair and fall! This emotion of yours is a delectable glass of wine to us!]

No matter where I looked, I could only see grotesque devils. Their words were provocative, like they could peer into my mind, and they were frantically trying to crack my mental defense.

I raised my foot and took a step forward as if I was walking on ground. Ruyue sensibly created a scaffolding out of ice.

“Shut it, small fries. I’ll only listen to ones that can survive my Evil Eyes.”

[I’m going to do it, Shin!]

“Go.”

Ruyue curled her body like a cat, then stretched in a one big motion. In the sky, which carried a smoky smell of sulfur, large translucent mirrors of ice began appearing.

[A futile attempt.]

[Mirrors only serve to reflect your ugliness.]

[Mirrors can’t stop fear.]

“You lot.”

I raised my head and gazed at the sky. With a radiant golden light, my Evil Eyes reflected off the countless mirrors.

“You lot aren’t reading my mind at all!”

Reflected off the mirrors, the power of petrification spread through the countless mirrors and eventually covered the entire sky. However, looking at the reflection of Evil Eyes didn’t cause

petrification. Even in Greek mythology, Perseus had killed Medusa by seeing her through the reflection on his bronze shield.

But my Evil Eyes were no longer ordinary Evil Eyes, and Ruyue's ice mirrors weren't ordinary mirrors.

I poured a terrifying, a truly terrifying amount of mana into my Evil Eyes, and Ruyue's mirrors had the ability to preserve most of the Evil Eyes' power.

As a result, facing a mirror was no different than facing me straight on, and there was only one path for those affected by my Evil Eyes.

Seeing rocks hail down from the sky, I smirked.

[What boundless mana.]

[He's not human!]

[He tricked us! This human is using the dungeon's power!]

“Ruyue, scatter more mirrors!”

[Un!]

This place blocked the dungeon's power and made it hard for me

to receive Sherafina's help. Compared to when I had the dungeon's power, I only had 60% of my mana. But if I quantified this amount, it was about 420,000 points, which was only 80,000 less than the maximum amount I had before I defeated the Beast King.

I was constantly growing. When my mana pool increased, it didn't stagnate, but accelerated instead. Not to mention, I had yet to turn all of the Beast King's mana to my own. My growth speed even frightened me sometimes, but I had no intention to stop myself. In fact, this wasn't enough.

[Do you think that's enough to win over fear? You think destroying such meager amount would affect me in any way!? Unfortunate! I am everlasting, always existing within hearts of humans! Do you not understand what it means to be immortal!? Do you not see what's awaiting you at the end of your futile struggles!?!]

The Fear King's gradually raised his voice. His body expanded like a sponge that absorbed water, and his minions continued to pop out endlessly. Just like he said, even if Hwaya charred him or I decimated his minions, he didn't seem to come close to dying.

But that was what he wanted us to think. Unfortunately for him, Absolute Soul could see through his antics.

"Hwaya, he just has high vitality! It's neither everlasting nor immortal!"

"I know...!"

Hwaya's flames grew brighter and transformed white. Every time she moved, black smoke exploded from the Fear King's giant body, and his indiscernible scream deafened my ears.

"I'm happy to fight like this!"

I wasn't just standing around either. Ruyue continued to make more mirrors, as if to compete with the Fear King's clones, and the power of my Evil Eyes continued to move from mirror to mirror. No matter how many of them assaulted me, it didn't matter. They couldn't provoke fear from me.

"In the end, you're also someone else's underling, right? Not to mention, you'll also die without knowing the truth! Three of your friends were already killed by us!"

[I am different from them. I exist, yet I am in a realm you cannot grasp!]

[The moment you peer into us, we come to live in your hearts!]

"When are you going to stop lying, you annoying mosquitos!"

Countless clones turned to stone and rained down. I raised my spear and lightly shattered the rock falling above me.

"See, I can destroy you just fine!"

[Let's see how long you'll last!]

“How long I'll last? That's what I want to ask you!”

Sharana blew away the clones flying towards Hwaya. They were then exposed to my Evil Eyes' power through the mirrors, and they soon fell after being petrified.

I shouted.

“Ruyue, freeze them all onto the ground! I'll give you 100,000 mana!”

[That's more than enough!]

I gave most of my remaining mana to Ruyue and drank a highest-grade mana potion I had on my belt. Unfortunately, mana potions weren't enough to rejuvenate my boundless mana pool. I had to rely on Peruta Circuit to do most of the hard work!

I raised my spear enveloped by an enormous whirlpool. The moment Ruyue froze the fallen rocks to the ground, I drew Talaria's power to the peak, used Divine Speed, and shot down towards the ground. Before I smashed into the ground, I struck my spear down and shouted at the top of my lungs.

“Gaia Buster!”

[Kyaaaaaaaaaaaaa!]

I grinned. This was the first time I made the Fear King scream with my power. As the petrified clones weren't dead until I thoroughly shattered them, I hadn't dealt much damage to the Fear King until now.

But with Ruyue trapping the petrified clones to the ground and me using Gaia Buster, no clone could have survived. Since he lost so many clones at once, it was normal for their main body to scream!

[You! Herooooooooooo!]

“I'll be keeping you busy!”

Hwaya's flames engulfed the Fear King's outstretched arm. Filling up this entire artificial world, Hwaya's flames danced and created a wave of flames.

“You think I just forgot about the humiliation I suffered from you? And when was I rejected? I wasn't! He said he'd accept me!”

I decided to pretend not to have heard what Hwaya said. Instead, I focused my attention towards the shattered pieces of land and made them shoot up into the sky.

Countless clones still filled up the sky. The amount of mana he had even overwhelmed the Beast King and the Lava King. Together with his powerful mental attacks, there wouldn't be many he couldn't defeat. In fact, if I faced him before I obtained the Beast King's power, he might have had a chance. If I didn't have Absolute Soul, I might already be bowing down to him, and if I didn't arrive in time, Hwaya would be doing the same.

But it was different now. I became a monster capable of wielding boundless mana consciously and instinctively, and Hwaya had succeeded in taking a step forward. As a result, the Fear King simply stood no chance.

“You call this fear? How laughable.”

I sneered.

“Break them all!”

The heaven and earth seemed to shatter. Countless rocks and ice carrying black lightning energy mixed together and shot across the sky, shattering the fragments of fear.

[Kyaaaaaaaaa!]

“It's too early to scream. I'm already just getting started.”

Seeing Gaia Buster tearing apart the Fear King's clones, I flashed my eyes. The Beast King's remaining mana was roused awake

feeling the movement of mana and attempted to go wild. I didn't squash it and accepted it. Wild instincts, having beaten off a fair amount of rationality, made me more energetic than before.

I raised my spear again. Now, I felt like I could do it. Within the next five minutes, I felt like Hwaya and I could kill him!

“This is what true fear is! Overlord!”

Chapter 292. The Last Member (9)

Overlord increased in power the more health and mana I had as it multiplied my power rather than adding to it.

Even now, the Beast King's mana was constantly melting into me. Overlord received this mana and amplified it, and the augmented mana dominated the mana I couldn't yet control and brought it into Peruta Circuit's flow.

Peruta Circuit drew in the Enigma surrounding my mana and created a whirlpool. This whirlpool served as a shield that could defend against everything and a blade that could cut everything.

“Huu...”

I drew in a quick breath. I felt it every time I used Overlord. During this 5 minute period, I always tried to grasp its true nature. This was an unknown mana. Enigma, a power that rivaled divine power and Sherafina's power.

Not even Sherafina could have created Overlord. Overlord was created from Skill Synthesis, which came from the artifact Loretta gave me, the Collector's Pocket Watch. I always knew Collector's Pocket Watch was a powerful item, but I now knew it wasn't just a powerful item. No matter how I thought about it, it wasn't something one should get as a quest reward.

As proof, the mana I wielded now...

[Is that the source of your confidence?]

[Truly mystical. It's too great a power for a mere human to wield.]

[No matter how great the power is, in the end, its wielder is a human. That will be the reason for your defeat.]

If anything, the Fear King really knew how to boast. Having a great power was no use if one's willpower was broken, but...

“Bluffs won't work on me!”

The whirlpool intensified, growing bigger by the second. Whispers of the Fear King's clones were cut apart, and the ones falling to the ground from Gaia Buster's impact were drawn towards the whirlpool and torn apart. The amplified mana from Overlord was being poured into the whirlpool entirely. At the same time, the whirlpool continuously pulled in the mana forming this world. Enigma's mana kept increasing ceaselessly.

[Kukuku, a human wants to devour my mana?]

“I said focus on me!”

Hwaya shouted. Surprisingly, the flames surrounding her were starting to look transparent.

“I won’t let you even scratch him!”

[Kuk!?]

The Fear King flinched, shocked by Hwaya’s flames. I immediately took action. Thanks to Gaia Buster and the huge whirlpool, the Fear King’s numerous clones were incapable of doing anything. Now, it was the time to attack his main body.

“Elementals, it’s time to party.”

[Yay!]

[Whoo, it was worth the wait!]

[I’m number 389,873 on the line. Take good care of me!]

[Uu, today isn’t the rollercoaster, right? Right?]

[Why does he keep coming?]

I didn’t approach him, simply standing in place as I pulled my spear back. When the spear blade grew and reached close to 70 meters, countless number of elementals jumped in. The whirlpool enveloping me naturally moved to the spear and started to spin fiercely.

[Uooooooooo!]

[Uaaaaaaaaa!]

[This must be a soul cleansing!]

Sorry, but that's not it.

[Aah, I'm transforming.]

[This is Prince-nim's power, the power to evolve us!]

[I feel like I got taller!]

Enigma's mana transformed the elementals' appearance. Of course, I couldn't see them as my soul didn't match their wavelengths, but I could at least see that the light they were giving off were growing brighter as they spun around in the whirlpool of Enigma. Since their strength affected the strength of my skills, this was only beneficial for me.

“Hwaya, restrain him!”

“I don't plan on stopping there!”

After Hwaya's confident shout, flames shooting out of her hands

greedily devoured atmospheric mana while fiercely charging toward the Fear King. Twisted together like a chain, Hwaya's flames penetrated the Fear King and held him together. At that moment...

[Good, humans. I will let you have a taste of this Fear King's power.]

The fear King's body, which was being restrained by Hwaya's chain of flames, suddenly split in half like an omelet cut by a knife. From the endless void, a huge eye of fear opened.

If his existence instilled fear into people and his clones brought this fear into reality, his single eye transformed a person's every bit of fear into a fear worse than death. In a way, it was like a venomous poison, making one take his own life. It evoked all negative experiences one faced throughout his life and engraved them into his mind. In fact, it even twisted and amplified these experiences. Once one rejected his own existence and refused tolerate it, the only thing left for him was death.

I realized that his eye were a type of Evil Eyes.

“Elemental Tempest!”

I shot my spear at it.

[Uoooooooo!]

[Too fierce! Too exciting!]

[Uweeeeeek!]

It was truly a sight to behold. Countless number of elementals shone within the whirlpool of Enigma, making the sky resemble a galaxy in a short time. Enigma also acquiesced its light to the elementals and focused solely on strengthening their powers. To be exact, I made it do so.

The storm of elementals struck the Fear King's eyes.

[KAAAAAAAAAAAK!]

A scream containing all fear and despair rang out. I waited for a moment with my spear still stretched out before changing it back to its original appearance. It was after I confirmed his eye being torn apart. I made a sigh of relief.

“Whew, that was dangerous.”

I was almost devoured. Though Absolute Soul was defending against his mental attacks, his eye had erased Absolute Soul's existence for a moment. If I didn't have Evil Eyes of Petrification, I might not have been able to use Elemental Tempest.

[KUOOOAAAA!]

[How could a human...!?!]

“Hwaya, are you okay!?”

I immediately checked for Hwaya’s safety. Since I was in such a state, I expected Hwaya to be worse. However, Hwaya wasn’t listening to me.

“You, die! Die!”

Transparent flames were burning all around her. I wondered how flames could be transparent, but since I was seeing them with my own eyes, I couldn’t deny their existence. She shot transparent fireballs at the Fear King’s single eye, which was untraceably torn apart by my Elemental Tempest. The Fear King shouted.

[Accept fear! Accept the despair of reality that waits you! In the end, you will have to face them all!]

His body, which had been of an indeterminate form, suddenly began to grow arms. These tentacle-like arms flew towards Hwaya and attempted to assault her. They carried tainted mana that seemed capable of instilling the same or even greater fear than looking into his eye. Hwaya scorched these arms and shouted fiercely.

“Shin, I’m going to finish him! Protect me!”

“Got it!”

Rather than submitting on fear, Hwaya used it as fuel to her anger and increased the power of her flames. Her Evil Eyes were surely helping, but I was still surprised by her willpower. She seemed to be rivaling even me who had Absolute Soul. Well, it was likely that my skill was affecting her too...

Looking at her flames, I was certain that she had taken a step into the same realm as Enigma. Perhaps, she might come to freely wield Enigma quicker than me!

“I can’t lose now, can I?”

I murmured silently and raised my spear. With just that movement, the subsided whirlpool rose up again. The whirlpool formed by pure mana began to spin fiercely with my will.

The Five Kings were losers who had no choice but to be satisfied standing in equal positions. If I couldn’t overwhelm them, how was I to fight the Demon Lord or the existence that these kings feared so much? How was I to put an end to this futile competition?

I needed my spear to be sharper. I needed it to have absolute power that could pierce through anything.

“... But I’ll let Hwaya do it here.”

Hwaya wanted this. I wasn’t so immature as to steal her thunder.

I gathered the huge spinning whirlpool into a single point at the tip of my spear. In the next moment, I lightly thrust my spear.

“Now, show me your true appearance!”

[Ku, kuaaaaaa!]

The Fear King’s tentacles that wouldn’t submit to Hwaya’s flames disappeared without trace. Even the Fear King’s body that didn’t make contact with the whirlpool began to slowly disappear from the outside.

“Good, I could incorporate it a bit.”

I was content knowing that I could mix a bit of the principle behind the strike I made a while ago. Perhaps, it was thanks to Enigma’s help. But in the end, Enigma was also part of my strength. Once I could control all of these freely, I would have nothing to fear.

[Foolish humans, you truly want to face me!? Kuaaaaaaak!]

While my whirlpool annihilated parts of the Fear King’s body, a giant grotesque creature began to appear in the sky. If the emotion known as fear had a living form, this would be it - grotesque, deformed, and repulsive.

But the Fear King, in the end, was a living creature! It wasn't an emotion that couldn't be erased!

“You're a fake. You can never be fear itself!”

Hwaya shouted curtly and raised her hand. On her palm, an immense amount of mana began to coagulate.

“Even if you are, I'll burn you up just fine!”

She made a fist, then lightly opened it. Though I couldn't see anything, I knew this was the strongest attack Hwaya could make. The Fear King's body burned up from invisible flames. He seemed to have found out there was no going back, as he gave up trying to make us afraid and muttered in vain.

[Ku, kuku... In the end, it turned out like he planned...! Transcendental, a new birth, and... Kuk, kukukuk!]

“Don't blabber on about ominous things and die!”

[This is what I can give you, a true fear...]

With that, the last wisp of his existence burned out.

We had defeated the Fear King.

Chapter 293. The Last Member (10)

The moment the Fear King died, I flew next to Hwaya. But when I noticed what state she was in, I stopped. She was taking deep, slow breaths. Every time she breathed in, a vast amount of mana rushed into her. It was her mana that scorched the Fear King. No... To be precise, it was mana that once belonged to the Fear King, having its impurities removed by Hwaya's flames.

“Looks like Hwaya found her path.”

Just like how I accepted the Beast King's mana without the dungeon's help, Hwaya was accepting the Fear King's mana as her own. I didn't want to bother her as she was going through this process, so I decided to just watch her from afar.

In just five minutes, Hwaya sucked in all the mana and opened her eyes. When she realized I staring at her, she made an expression that seemed to say, ‘oops.’

“S-Sorry, Shin. I got too excited and took everything... C-Come here. I'll give you half.”

She smiled and gestured me to come over. I knew what she planned to do, but I asked her out of politeness anyways.

“And how do you plan on sharing it?”

“You already know. Uhuhu, uhuhuhu. Now, now, come here.”

Hwaya pucked her lips like a duck and stretched her arms out towards me. I didn't even need to listen.

“You can take it all.”

Hwaya shouted disappointedly at my cold reply.

“Why!? Come here and take you hard-earned share! Hurry!”

“I experienced the same thing when I killed the Beast King. I haven't even finished processing his mana yet.”

“Tsk.”

Hearing what I said, Hwaya clicked her tongue noticeably. I grinned and spoke.

“Let's go out now. There's still one king left.”

“Ah, right. We should.”

Even as she said that, she stole glances at me as if it was a shame we had to leave so soon. Really, what am I going to do with her? I sighed and approached her.

“Don't give me any mana though, alright?”

“Yeah!”

Hwaya replied with a full smile. Since she looked cute, I decided to forgive her.

Soon afterwards, when Hwaya and I came outside, we couldn't feel anyone's presence... except one. Kain was the only one remaining. He was sitting on empty air, and stood up when he saw us.

“Not bad.”

“You saw us?”

“Sleipnir was holding on.”

Hwaya whispered in my ear.

“Who's that?”

“He's the one who helped me enter the dungeon. He'll be Revival's newest member.”

“Ah, so you really couldn't enter using normal methods.”

Hwaya muttered with a bitter smile and asked me worriedly.

“I don’t know how you roped him in, Shin, but if the price you had to pay was helping his world...”

“That’s not it. Besides, I had to meet him eventually, so don’t worry about it.”

“Mm... It feels like you’re getting farther away.”

Hwaya seemed to have felt uneasy as she carefully took my hand and held it tightly. I didn’t stop her as it was a pleasant feeling anyways. On the other hand, Kain’s eyebrows twitched.

“You’re quite a man.”

“I am. So? Where is everyone?”

“A dungeon shattered and the one you call King appeared.”

“Now!?”

I somewhat expected it when no one was here, but I was still shocked. Not only did they use the dungeon’s power for themselves, they even broke the dungeon and appeared on Earth!? What shocked me the most was the timing when the dungeon shattered. It was almost like they knew what was happening elsewhere!

I wiped the thought off my head for now. It was more important to go help my friends.

“Are you going now?”

Kain asked me in a relaxed voice. I could tell by his attitude that he wanted to maintain the distance between us for a little longer. I couldn't blame him.

“Of course. I trust them, but you never what's going to happen.”

“I already did my job today, which was using Gungnir and Sleipnir. I won't help you any more than this.”

“I know... But you can't do the same tomorrow.”

The promise between us was a mutual contract. I needed his help, and he also seemed to need mine. At my words, which carried this sentiment, Kain slowly nodded.

“Of course, I promise. Once today passes, I will join your guild and become a member of Revival.”

“Good. Hwaya, let's go.”

Hwaya glared at Kain unhappily, but she seemed to have decided to leave things to me as she shut her eyes and answered.

“Un.”

The King of the Dead must have appeared in Vatican City. When I imagined countless undead breaking historical monument at the headquarter of the Catholic Church, I couldn't help but find it ironic. As I flew around the world previously, I set Return's transfer points here and there, and thankfully, Rome happened to be one of them.

“Return.”

I closed my eyes and opened them back up. For a moment, I was worried I traveled to the wrong place, but we were indeed in Rome. Rome was close to Vatican City, and because Yua once told me she wanted to visit Vatican City, I had remembered to set Rome as a transfer point.

But the Rome I was looking at looked nothing like the Rome I knew. This place had already become hell.

“What's going on...?”

“Shin, over there!”

Hwaya seemed to have sensed something, as she pointed to the distance. I soon understood how she found out so quickly. A giant flame dragon was flying in the sky.

[KUAAAAAAAAAA!]

The hell breaking out under us caught our feet, but my friends' lives had greater priority. We shot towards the direction of Laki's roar. As we flew, we could clearly see the Vatican Walls, which no longer stood as they once did.

There wasn't even a single building left intact, and it was even harder to find any survivors. Even Rome was broken apart to such extent. It wouldn't make sense if Vatican City was fine.

All we saw was grey smoke, dust, and undeads. The Death King had turned the entire city into death.

“Son!”

“Father!”

Father, who was riding on Laki's back, shouted in rejoice when he saw us. He didn't look hurt, but his rough breathing made me worry.

“Did you save my daughter!?”

“I'm here, Aju... Father!”

“Good! Hurry, go help the other kids!”

Other kids? I looked around in hurry. I couldn't see Daisy or

anyone else. Considering how the Death King was also missing, it seemed they were fighting in a different place. But then why did Daisy leave Laki here? Was she fine without Laki? A sense of uneasiness swept across my head, which I immediately shook off. Thankfully, Father appeased my worry.

“Daisy left Laki for us. She must be having a hard time so go help her!”

There were countless monsters other than Laki in the air. Each of them were grotesque and unsightly. They looked similar to the Fear King’s clones, but unlike the clones who received the Fear King’s power, these monsters looked lifeless. They were all undead.

“Why did you split up?”

“When he appeared, he brought an enormous army. Just the power he had alone was terrifying! ... He’s dangerous, probably the most dangerous out of the Five Kings. Daisy must have known that.”

Father gritted his teeth and thrust his spear in front of him. Vibration energy converged onto a single point before shooting out in a straight line. Monsters flying near it, aiming for Laki’s flesh, disappeared without leaving a single drop of blood.

“His power of death is contagious. It’s a vicious curse that only the Elixir can cure! Don’t underestimate him and get yourself hurt. Got it!?”

“I’ve heard more than enough!”

Father wasn’t the only one on Laki’s back. Ye-Eun was also here, scrunching down and carrying two black daggers. No, this wasn’t Ye-Eun, but Duca.

“Hurry up and go help Hecate’s disciple! The Lava King is enough to hold out here!”

In the midst of Laki clashing with countless monsters, I felt an ominous death energy from the distance. The moment Daisy realized how dangerous the Death King was, she must have left Laki behind to deal with his army while she left to fight him directly. When I was about to charge towards her direction, Hwaya spoke up.

“Shin, it looks like I’ll have to stay and help Ina.”

“Ina? Shoot!”

I only just realized. My daughter was standing alone on the ground dominated by death. The freezing energy shooting out from her hands were destroying the monsters approaching her.

In terms of raw power, the monsters on ground were far more damaging than the monsters in the sky. This was because they had devoured all living beings and turned them into one of their own. To further strengthen themselves, they had even broken out of

Vatican Walls and were trying to reach out towards other parts of Italy. Currently, Ina was stopping them all by herself. Though she possessed a boundless mana, she was still a child who was less than ten years old. But she was still facing so many undead by herself!

To stop the destruction from spreading, to protect even one more life, Ina was standing her ground while dripping with sweat. Seeing her tragic fate, I bit my lips. It seemed Ina was the only thing Hwaya could think about, as she let go of my hand, shouting out as she flew off.

“Take care of Daisy, Shin!”

“Yeah. You take care of our daughter, Hwaya!”

With that, we split up. I flew up, while Hwaya flew down.

“Mommy!”

“Yeah, Mommy’s here, so don’t worry!”

Hearing their heartfelt shouts with my keen hearing, I smiled as I soared up. After breaking through the clouds, I felt chills from Daisy’s power. Just how far did she bring the Death King!? Thankfully, I could feel the presence of death and the power of a god facing it!

“Daisy, Sumire!”

“Kang Shin, here... Now, we won. Huhu.”

“You came, Shin-nim!”

Seeing their unrelenting faith in my strength, I smiled bitterly. She had to be using a god’s power, but she was still dripping with sweat. Controlling Laki and facing a king couldn’t be that easy!

On the other hand, Sumire who was protecting her looked unfamiliar. She wore a shining silver armor with a spear in one hand and the Aegis in the other. A full-body armament?

“I got stronger too, Shin-nim!”

I was about to say something, but decided against it. Now wasn’t the time to ask questions. All I needed to know was that Sumire had become more reliable. Not to mention...

[The Hero is here. He came to defeat me. The Hero really defeated the others and came here. Haha, hahahaha!]

An existence far more fearful than someone like the Fear King was looking straight into me.

Chapter 294. The Last Member (11)

[The kings. You really erased them all? Hahahaha!]

“This guy’s too punky.”

He had a skeletal body. Was he a lich? The robe he was wearing was oozing with dreary aura, suggesting it was a peak grade artifact.

“That robe must cost a fortune.”

[I really wanted to see you!]

He abandoned the enemies he was fighting just a moment ago and completely turned his attention towards me. Daisy and Sumire’s seemingly devastating attacks poured down on him and shaved off his mana, but he was ignoring them completely.

I looked around. I couldn’t see Licorice or Lotte.

“Where’s Licorice?”

“Licorice and Lotte, both in Event Dungeon... Looking for his, life vessel.”

A life vessel, I had heard about it before. A lich is said to store his life energy in a container, making him immortal unless the

container was broken. A lich's body was real, yet unreal. As long as his life vessel was fine, a lich could always create a body for himself with atmospheric mana.

Daisy must have brought him all the way here to get him as far away from his life vessel as possible.

[Hahaha, it'll be hard to find! You should value your life. I made sure to hide it thoroughly!]

“You're different than the kings I've met so far.”

[Indeeeeeed! I'm very different!]

I was already starting to hate him.

[Those guys are brainless! Not to mention, they're headstrong.]

Before Sumire's spear stabbed him, the Death King swung the staff in his hand and created a barrier.

[‘Earth's Hero? I won't lose to someone only half-complete. If it's me, I can devour him and conquer Earth.’ That's what those stupid kings were thinking even after finding out about the Lava King's death. This is the result! Of the four fools, that ray who escaped to Earth was probably the wisest. Though, he probably got killed by you anyways! Kahahaha!]

With that, he raised his free hand into the sky. In his hand was a stick used to control puppets. There were strings coming out of the stick, but I couldn't tell what they were connected to.

[And what I dislike the most is that everything is happening as he intended!]

“As he intended? You mean the one above your head?”

“Oh, that's it! That's an excellent way to put it! Yes, he's always above our heads!]

Daisy seemed to mutter something and the energy he was releasing decreased significantly. Sumire stood in the sky, either with Daisy's help or with her armor's ability, and lowered her body. It looked like she was preparing to attack with a lance, even though the spear in her hand wasn't for charging.

The Death King, however, didn't pay attention to what they were doing.

[You see, I hate this arrangement. I'm the type who's not satisfied until everything is in my control. Having to take someone else's orders couldn't be more unpleasant!]

“Orders, huh.”

[To him, us Five Kings were nothing but chess pieces. He must have thought he instigated us cleverly, but I could see through

him. Our fate was already sealed — to be sacrifices!]

“Sacrifices? For what?”

He raised his staff. It had a clear luster like it was made out of platinum. The crystal ball on its tip shone in a five-colored light.

[Obviously, it’s for you, Hero!]

“Sacrifices... for me...?”

[Curious?]

A twisted smile appeared on the lich’s skull head. I asked.

“And why do you want to tell me these things?”

[An excellent question! It’s because I want to get rid of him! Hero, I assume you don’t enjoy dancing on his palm either. Listen to me, and join me!]

He swung his wooden stick around. I could see its strings stretching and relaxing.

[There’s not much time left, Hero. I won’t be able to avoid his eyes for much longer. So hear me out and tell me the answer.]

“Shin, don’t listen to him.”

Daisy interrupted him. Her eyes were shining in a scarlet light.

“He wants to use you.”

[Isn’t that obvious!? I will use the Hero, and the Hero will use me! This is a true trade... Ei, you’re being annoying, little girl!]

“We won’t just be annoying!”

Sumire made a ringing shout, and immediately afterward, the staff the Death King pushed out randomly clashed with Sumire’s spear. Not only did his staff disappear without a trace, but the energy he was emitting was also cut down immensely. In exchange, Sumire had to fall back like she lost most of her armament.

[You bitch, my staff!]

“Shin-nim, I’ll leave the rest to you!”

I slowly raised my spear in response to Sumire’s shout, igniting chaos flames above it.

To be completely honest, I still had many questions I wanted to ask him. About the mastermind behind them and the meaning behind them being a sacrifice. I didn’t have enough information to

solve this puzzle on my own. Still, I decided to be content with where I was. It was clear he wanted to use me for his benefits. Furthermore...

“You, if all you wanted to do was talk to me, why did you turn Vatican City and Rome into a land of death?”

[I’m the king of the dead. Everywhere I go must be filled with death. Hero, those that face death once are granted eternal life in exchange! Think about it! If I came alone, do you think anyone would have listened to me? No! You would have tried to kill me immediately!]

Well, he was right.

“Looks like I’ll need to beat you up before you can think properly.”[1. A little pun. The word for “to be right/correct” is the same as the word for “to be hit/struck/etc”.]

[No, Hero. We still have something to talk about!]

He pulled on the stick he held. It had to be an artifact of some sort! In the middle of charging towards him, I was forced to a stop.

Even though nothing was tied to its strings just a moment ago, now, there was a peculiar doll resembling a devil dangling on it. The doll was about 3 meters tall, which seemed physically too big for the Death King’s tiny stick to control.

Rather than the doll, however, I was more concerned with what the doll was holding in its hands. It was a person.

“... Who’s that?”

[Good question. This is your parent! Your mother!]

It felt like the world was turning white. I wanted to charge towards him, but I couldn’t move. No matter how quick I was with Divine Speed, it wouldn’t be enough to retrieve mother from that devil doll. So for now, I had to stay still.

I clenched my teeth and caught my breath. Then, I asked calmly. So calmly that even I was surprised with myself.

“My mother is in the safest place in this world. How could that be her?”

Mother was always guarded by the succubi, and knowing my importance, Guardian and Freedom Wing also assisted in protecting her. With Licorice always being by my side, I should know as soon as something happened to Mother...

But Licorice wasn’t here right now. She was in an isolated space looking for a way to kill this lich.

[Did you really think the monsters here were all I had? How could that be! Think about it, Hero. There are only two people I’m afraid of in this world!]

He put up two fingers with his hand.

[One is him and the other is you! No one else can stop me. Right, not even this doll! Unlike a Hero, you were a bit foolish. If she was so important to you, you should have protected her better!]

“You killed them all...?”

[Of course! I’m facing the Hero who killed four of the Five Kings. I had to have some sort of an insurance plan, don’t you think?]

I tried to message Licorice, but the Death King’s mana filling up this area prevented me. But if he was telling the truth, Licorice had to be furious right now. There a lot of succubi were in charge of protecting Mother, especially when we had something like this going on.

[There’s no need to be mad, Hero! Look, your mother is perfectly fine! Like I said before, I want your cooperation. I’m just using this... tool, yes, a tool to make our talk go smoother!]

He waved his wooden stick and the devil doll opened its mouth. That thing was undoubtedly an artifact rivaling or surpassing his staff. After all, it must have slaughtered dozens of SS ranked succubi.

I closed my eyes. Was it a mistake to have all Revival members fight? If I left just a couple of them to protect Mother... No, that

was stupid. How were we supposed to do anything if we had to split up our members to protect everyone's family? How were we supposed to fight against the monsters and demons invading Earth if we had to divert our attention so much?

Until now, I believed monsters or demons couldn't do anything to my mother. I believed my mother was completely safe.

But I was wrong. Completely wrong. They might have been safe for a long time, but that didn't mean they would continue to be safe. I should have known that, but I let my guard down and got smacked in the back at the most critical moment.

[Now, now, don't move. If you move even a little bit, this little stick will shake. When this stick shakes, the doll attached to it will also shake. When the doll shakes... Heh. So, Hero, are you ready to talk now?]

Mother seemed to be sleeping. I didn't know whether she was originally sleeping or she was put to sleep, but after seeing Mother's face, I looked at Daisy and Sumire.

“ ... ”

“Shin-nim.”

[Let's form a plan together! A plan to give that guy a blow! Exciting, isn't it?]

The Death King rambled on excitedly. His modus operandi was twisted. It wasn't what normal people could come up with. Taking a hostage just to talk? To him, that was obvious. A fool like him laughed at the other four kings, saying that they were defeated because they challenged me without knowing anything about me.

Really, none of the Five Kings knew anything about me.

“Fine, let's talk.”

[Ooooh! Good, that's excellent, Hero! I knew you would understand!]

His skull head cackled as he laughed. At the same time, something in embrace twitched. Something that was alive, yet without a life. It moved in a way that no one else could comprehend, a way that only I could accept.

[I am Dortu. Executing Master's command.]

My fourth elemental thus made its move.

Chapter 295. Coming Closer, Going Farther

(1)

The change was quick to happen. The devil doll controlled by the Death King suddenly slumped down as if its strings were cut. As a lich sensitive to mana, the Death King immediately noticed this change and shook his stick in wonder. But it was too late. The devil doll only made creaking noises in response.

[Hm, it's not moving, even though this doll is like a clone of mine.]

Of course, it didn't move. The devil doll should have turned metallic. Seeing as how it was making creaking noises, it was most likely struggling in its own way. Unfortunately, the Death King no longer had control of the devil doll.

With the doll unable to move, it let go of Mother. Daisy's magic was quicker than the Death King, and I was even faster.

[Oh my! Hero, you are quite fast!]

The Death King put the devil doll away and used magic to secure Mother, but Daisy's magic countered his and I safely took Mother in my arms. But when I received her, I frowned.

“She's perfectly fine?”

[Hahaha, as long as you promise to cooperate with me, she'll be fine! Now, if you know what situation you are in, we should have a nice conver...!?!]

The finger he was sticking out towards me turned silver.

[I am Dortu. Pointing at Master is rude.]

[Something's here.]

He whispered. He immediately looked around, but he couldn't see Dortu. Naturally, someone who controlled undead couldn't perceive Dortu. Dortu wasn't born like any other elementals. It was possible that even elves couldn't perceive Dortu.

[But this won't change anything. I made sure to put extra care into her, you see. I'm the only one that can cure her.]

There was nothing more foolish than putting in effort to control an unperceivable situation. At least in this aspect, the Death King seemed to be better than the other kings. Rather than looking for Dortu, he was threatening me, who controlled Dortu.

[If you don't return her to me soon, my mana inside her will go... BOOM! I assume you won't like that.]

He laughed mischievously.

[Come on, Hero. Think about it. There's no need for us to fight. Aren't you curious about the things I know?]

“Question, do you only have one devil doll?”

[Hahaha, you're asking if I took other hostages? A precious magical tool like this, even I only have one. So turn it back, Hero. Otherwise, your mother will be in a pickle.]

He shook his wooden stick. As the strings danced, the devil doll creaked creepily.

I didn't dare believe him easily, but he certainly only had one wooden stick, and even if he didn't, I just had to take care of him before he could do anything else. As such, I immediately took action.

“Dortu.”

[I am Dortu. Assaulting the enemy.]

In that instant, the lich's abdominal bones shattered. The metallicised devil doll had penetrated his stomach. It seemed he didn't expect me to steal control over his doll. His momentary lapse in judgement had dealt him a huge blow.

[Kuhuk!]

“Looks like you’re physically weakest out of all the kings.”

Though I said it half-jokingly, the devil doll strengthened by Dortu’s ability was probably strong enough to deal critical damage to even the Beast King. Of course, that didn’t mean Dortu was always that powerful. It was just that the previous attack carried a world-shaking amount of mana.

Dortu took the mana within the devil doll and attacked the Death King. This doll had the ability to hide its presence and was powerful enough to slaughter dozens of succubi. It could even instantly come back to the Death King while carrying Mother. Since such a doll was being used as a one-time assault weapon, its power was imaginable.

The doll’s attacks didn’t just end with breaking the Death King’s bones. As the doll slowly broke down, the Death King’s lich body began to turn silver starting from his stomach. The silver color also spread from his previously metallised finger, spreading to his fingers joints, hand, wrist, and so on. It was as if the power of metal controlling the doll was devouring the lich.

[You’re mutating the body of a king!? What power is this!?!]

“Didn’t you say you placed your life force in a container? I’m just changing one lifeless object to another. It’s no different than transforming the devil doll into metal.”

[Impossible!]

That's what I also thought, but after taking 300,000 mana from me, Dortu made it possible. Perhaps, the elemental skills I finally mastered was also helping.

Seeing his body turning into a piece of metal, the Death King glared at me and shouted.

[Hero, I enjoy talking things out rather than resorting to force. But if you go any farther, I will blow up your mother. I am not kidding!]

“You won't be able to now.”

I also glared back at him. Now that Dortu made his move, there was nothing the Death King could do. If I had to point out the reason for his loss, it would be that he was a lich, as Dortu didn't have the ability turn living beings into metal.

[I'm the king of the dead. Don't think you can win against me with something like this...!]

From the unmetallised part of his body, his mana began to boil. The Death King gave up on trying to control the curse on Mother and concentrated all his mana into his body. But this was exactly what Dortu was waiting for. He greedily devoured the Death King's mana and sped up the metallisation process with it. Against Dortu, the Death King was nothing but prey.

Not long afterwards, the Death King realized there was nothing

he could do. Blood red light shone from his eye sockets as he roared.

[You're the one who made this decision. Without me, you won't be able to resolve that curse. The moment I lose my body, the countdown will start, and in less than five minutes, your mother will lose her life. Not to mention, you won't be able to find my life vessel. When I return, you will have another decision to make. I won't be so nice next time around.]

With that, he turned into a metallic doll. Daisy scrutinized his body and looked at me with her eyes shining.

“He's not, dead. Turning him into metal, can't kill him. I have to... kill him.”

“I know. You can finish him off. I hope Licorice and Lotte will come back soon with his life vessel.”

“But, Kang Shin's mother.”

Hearing Daisy's worry-ridden voice, I smiled. Even now, the curse located in Mother's heart was beating threateningly, but I coincidentally learned how to deal with curses like this today. When, you ask?

“Sumire, take Mother!”

“Y-Yes! Eh? S-Shin-nim!?”

After handing off Mother to Sumire, I used World Trickery. It would have been perfect if I could use Sky God's Play, but I had already used it in my fight with the Beast King. Fortunately, it wasn't absolutely necessary to have it for my plan.

The method I thought of was simple. Among the monsters I've fought, there was one called the Superior Doppelganger. These monsters had the ability to get bigger or smaller. Thus, I transformed into a Superior Doppelganger and made myself undetectably tiny. Though it was a rather roundabout way, this way, I could still make myself tiny using World Trickery.

After transforming, I flew into Mother's nostrils and continued through her esophagus. Though the Death King had said she had five minutes, it wouldn't be strange if there was even less time.

As I flew towards Mother's heart, I suppressed the feeling of urgency and tried my best to stay calm. Thankfully, I had experienced something similar before and could easily find her heart. Immediately, I noticed a black tumor-like curse growing on her beating heart. I held myself back from cursing aloud and reached my hand out towards it.

"Huu, let's do this."

I initiated Peruta Circuit.

While maintaining a small enough size to not harm Mother, I sucked the curse in using Peruta Circuit's power. If I hadn't fought

the Beast King, I would have never imagined being able to do this.

“Come and fight me!”

The black curse resisted fiercely, but it couldn't hold out against Peruta Circuit's pull. Soon, the curse reluctantly hopped off Mother's heart and charged towards me. In exchange for receiving it directly, I drew the curse into Peruta Circuit's spin. Naturally, it was safer to take it with my hand than my heart.

“Come, come!”

With my mind focused entirely on Peruta Circuit, I began to drip with sweat. The curse felt acrid and stuffy, and it was constantly trying to devour me whole. But I concentrated my mana onto the hand I had reaching out. The mana whirlpool carrying the curse moved towards my hand and it began to turn black. It seemed it was impossible to defend against it completely.

“Just hold out a little longer...!”

A few seconds afterwards, the curse staying in Mother's heart was pulled away completely, focusing on my hand, which had a much more appetizing mana.

“Done! ... I'll see you in a bit, Mother!”

With a black curse-filled pearl in hand, I quickly used Return. The transfer point, of course, was Rome, where Hwaya and I

arrived before. It was still overflowing with zombies.

[Guoooooooooo!]

“Thank you for being here!”

Almost like it was waiting for me, a zombie pushed its head towards me. I wanted to give him a big bear hug if possible, but I was in a rush. I touched him with my hand and shouted.

“Cadeceus!”

Exactly 10 seconds later, one zombie carrying a death curse exploded.

Chapter 296. Coming Closer, Going Farther (2)

“Thank goodness.”

Seeing the zombie explode into pieces, I sighed in relief. That curse was just too dangerous. If I didn't push it to something else using the black snake's power, it might have been difficult to use other regeneration abilities.

“Daisy, Sumire... Ah, the messaging system doesn't work right now.”

The Death King wasn't dead yet. His influence was still spread out across Vatican City and Rome. I had to destroy this life vessel thing as quickly as possible.

Using Peruta Circuit, I began to fill up my drained mana. After blowing away a tiny wisp of the curse left on my hand and cleaning up some of the nearby zombies, I shot up into the sky.

“The monsters in the sky are... mostly taken care of.”

I could still hear Laki's heartfelt roar. Laki was truly powerful, as he was still beaming with strength after dyeing the death-filled sky with lava. It looked like I didn't need to worry about Father or Ye-Eun.

I wanted to go help Hwaya and Ina... But it looked like this domain of death would only disappear once the Death King died. In that case, it was more efficient to join Licorice and Lotte to search for the life vessel. Daisy and Sumire would likely do the same.

“Alright, let’s go.”

The whirlpool shrouding my body alleviated the fatigue I suffered from the curse and continued battles. At the same time, it filled me up with a new power. Reinforced with the Beast King’s mana, my body full of energy once again. It was a different feeling than when I used the dungeon’s power. This power completely followed my command and seemed to have its own will. I was in my peak condition.

“Dear Husband!”

When I was flying towards the presence of Licorice and Lotte, Licorice found me first and headbutted into my embrace. I received her gently and patted her back with a bitter smile. Soon, Lotte who was in her wyvern form came next to me too.

[I knew Hero was safe.]

“Yeah, I’m happy you’re safe too, Lotte.”

[But... I failed.]

Lotte who was happily greeting me slumped her tail. I had an idea what she meant. I gave Licorice, who was sniffing my neck, a smack on the head, and asked.

“You didn’t find his life vessel?”

“Owie, that hurt... But no, we didn’t. It’s too hard. If I knew beforehand, I would have gone looking for it we killed him. Daisy said he had a magic that could forcefully sever the contract Lotte and I had with Dear Husband and told us to get back.”

“I see.”

“But even without the contract, Dear Husband is the only one for me! She’s so rude!”

“There might have been more to it than just having our contract severed. Regardless, it’s good that nothing happened.”

While necromancers could command a large number of undead, they also had numerous curses in their arsenal. Daisy probably knew what the Death King was capable of based on what she could do herself.

“It’s good that Daisy was here.”

What he had done to Vatican City didn’t seem so simple. As a necromancer herself with knowledge in this field, Daisy had taken the appropriate action to minimize the damage.

“There’s a lot we have to talk about, but that’ll have to wait until we finish up the Death King.”

“Un. He should be nearby, but I can’t find him no matter what magic I use.”

Even if his life force was contained in a separate container, it was impossible to move if the container was too far. Consequently, a lich had to hide his life vessel on himself or nearby. It was natural for a lich to be weaker the farther he was from his life vessel. The Death King I faced just now most likely couldn’t show his full power. Otherwise, no matter how amazing Dortu’s attack was, it would have been impossible to metallicize him that fast.

“Eh?”

A thought suddenly flashed through my mind. To put this thought into action, I whispered.

“Dortu, you here?”

[I am Dortu. Always by Master’s side.]

Dortu immediately replied. He talked succinctly without any fluff. A more important characteristic he had was being invisible. At first, I didn’t even know Dortu was born. Only when I got a message asking if I wanted to form a contract with a new elemental did I realize the metal egg I carried around no longer existed. This

had happened only a few days ago.

Well, perhaps it was wrong to say he was invisible. Dortu had the ability to turn inanimate objects into metal and could infest all metals. At the moment, he was likely staying in my armor, spear, or even my earring or necklace.

“Dortu, you said you could turn any inanimate object into metal, right?”

[I am Dortu. Affirmative.]

“Then can you turn this entire area into metal?”

[I am Dortu. Requires lots of mana.]

I grinned and immediately activated Succubus Queen’s Tattoo. Previously, using Dortu’s power to metallicize the Death King took most of my mana. Even after some time had passed, I had only recovered to about 50%. But with that amount doubling instantly, I was once again overflowing with mana. Just in case, I gulped down a mana potion and ordered Dortu.

“You can take as much mana as you want. Dortu, go wild!”

[I am Dortu. Executing Master’s order.]

Dortu’s reply was relaxed yet full of energy. Immediately

afterward, the ground below me began to metallicize. The black earth filled with an aura of death started to turn silver.

“Wow, he’s amazing! But Dear Husband, what happens to the organisms living underground?”

“I’m a liberal art major so I don’t know.”

I replied with a serious face. Presumably, organisms living underground would die as everything around them turned into metal, but since I wasn’t sure, I didn’t say anything. Meanwhile, the silver color spread farther and deeper.

“He sure buried it deep.”

“... Shiny.”

Daisy and Sumire arrived. There was also a silver lich shining brightly.

“Hey.”

“I understand Kang Shin’s feeling. But dead undead, good undead.”

“An undead is dead anyway...”

I made a groaning noise but didn't say anything more. I knew Daisy was far more knowledgeable than me when it came to the undead. If she said it was safe, it was. But I couldn't see Mother, who Sumire should be protecting.

“Where's Mother?”

“Yungoong-nim took her and left. Most of the monsters in the air were cleaned up, so Laki and Ye-Eun are enough to deal with the rest. Since there might be traces of the curse left on Shin-nim's mother, he took her to see Ludia-nim.”

“That's a good idea. It's not like having more people would help in finding the life vessel.”

Daisy came up next to me.

“A life vessel is, a lump of life force. Impossible to metallicize. Good plan.”

“Yeah, but what if it isn't here? I can't do this that often you know.”

Everywhere I looked was filled with silver light. By now, it stopped expanding outward and was digging deeper into the earth. Daisy stared down at the ground and soon nodded.

“It's okay. Found it.”

[I am Dortu. Mission complete.]

Their voices overlapped. Immediately afterward, Daisy put her hand on the metal ground and closed her eyes.

“There’s a big resistance. Prepare to defend.”

Sumire raised her shield and stepped forward in front of Licorice and me. Daisy then started to mumble words I couldn’t understand, and the ground began to shine brightly.

“Reason he said we won’t find it, I understand.”

Daisy spoke calmly. The earth rumbled and the vibration spread out into the air.

“He made, thorough preparations. He divided, his life force.”

“Isn’t that a Horcrux... No, nevermind.”

Soon, something resembling a grain of sand popped up above the metal ground. When Licorice reached her hand out, a rainbow-colored fog sucked it in and trapped it. Daisy nodded her head and continued her work. More and more grains of sand appeared above the ground and Licorice promptly retrieved them with her fog.

Thanks to Licorice helping out with her powerful magic, their

working speed slowly increased. The grains of sand flying around the rainbow fog resembled a starry sky. Seeing these brightly shining dots, Licorice gritted her teeth.

“Without Dear Husband, we wouldn’t have made it in time.”

“Dortu, hax.”

[I am Dortu. Not hax.]

“It’s reacting! Get ready!”

After collecting some portion of the life vessel, the metallicized ground began to turn black. It was as if the Death King was making a final struggle, preventing us from taking more of his life force. However, Dortu wasn’t slacking off.

[I am Dortu. I execute Master’s command. I transform everything into metal.]

Silver light began to cover the ground once again. Soon, the ground began to turn gold. I asked Dortu just in case.

“Is that pure gold?”

[I am Dortu. Pure gold can’t change. Once something changes to gold, even Dortu can’t change it. Pure gold is the metal with highest mana resistance. It also has a high magical ability. It

requires lots of mana.]

So he didn't need to turn the ground into gold before, but he had to now to stomp the lich's final struggle. At this moment, I realized something. If I understood him correctly, as long as I gave Dortu mana, he could change even a simple stone into gold!

"Sorry Dear Husband, but if this elemental can really change stone into gold, he can't be ordinary."

Gold wasn't just valuable on Earth. Even in other worlds, it was at the apex of precious metals. It was also why the dungeon used gold as its currency. Although I had uncountably many gold in my inventory, there was a difference between having a large amount of gold and being able to make an infinite amount of gold.

Just like Dortu said, gold was a magical metal. Although it couldn't compare to Lukadion, which made up the Luka continent's holysword, or the famous mithril, just the fact that gold was used a universal currency across countless worlds showed how valuable it was. Now, I could simply make gold through my elemental's power.

Where did I get Dortu's egg from again? If I remember correctly, it was from Luka continent, during Syrmia Bamirtuno's funeral. She said she was from a world called Xenon. Were there more elementals like Dortu in that world? ... Impossible. If that were the case, the value of gold in the dungeon should have fallen when they connected with Xenon. In any case, it seemed I needed to visit this Xenon world one day.

While I was thinking about all this, the ground had completely transformed into pure gold. Past a certain point, the land remained in its black color of death, but within a certain radius of us, no speck of black color could be seen. It was quite ironic considering that the Death King's life force was sleeping underground.

“There. This is the end!”

Daisy raised her foot and stomped down. The metallic ground sunk in and rolled like a wave. From underneath her foot, something began to charge towards her.

“Just die obediently, give it to me.”

When Daisy spread her arms open, silver light gathered on her hands. I instinctively knew that this was Hecate's power. Daisy had saved her power to thoroughly end the Death King's life.

[KAAAAAAAAAAAAAK!]

A loud death throe shook the earth. The most tenacious and nerve-wrecking king was finally dying.

The pieces of the life vessel trying to assault her burnt up under her silver light, and the same happened to the sparkly grains of sand in Licorice's rainbow fog. When Daisy cusped her hands together, the fog moved towards her hands and shone periodically.

Some time later, Daisy opened her hands. There was an octagonal translucent silver object floating inside. Daisy spoke contently.

“Remote controller. Meli’s remote.”

“... Is that short for Metal Lich?”

Daisy jumped in shock and looked away with a flushed face.

“Kang Shin, you know me too well... Do you like me, that much?”

Silence descended. If Licorice didn’t try to give Daisy a Hectopascal Kick, we would have all stayed frozen for a bit longer.

Regardless, we managed to finish off the last remaining king.

As grand scale as our battle was, its aftermath was just as grand. The Beast King and the Fear King could be quickly summarized as Revival defeating the gates that appeared above Bordeaux, but the same couldn't be done for the horrific deaths at the heart of a religion with the over 1.2 billion followers worldwide.

The Death King had revealed himself above Vatican City and had killed almost all of its people. Although Revival marched straight to Vatican City after hearing about what happened, we couldn't prevent large number of casualties from occurring. Vatican City itself didn't have too many citizens, but it was always booming with tourists and pilgrims.

Thankfully, the Pope had survived just long enough for Revival to come to his aid. Although we didn't specifically strive to save him and had treated him like any other human, after all was said and done, he requested a one on one meeting to show his gratitude.

But as we needed time to mourn the deaths of our comrades, we put his request aside. The Pope was the least of our priorities.

Other than the members deployed to Vatican City, all other members undertook operations to clear monsters in Japan and China. Consequently, they didn't have to face the devil doll.

If some of them were forced to fight the devil doll, I didn't know what would have happened. They might have saved Mother from being kidnapped, but it was just as likely that we would have to hold more funerals.

After defeating the Death King and killing the remaining monsters in Vatican City, the death domain set up by the Death King finally disappeared. Only after this did the dungeon's functionality come back fully. It was also at this time that Licorice found out about the deaths of the succubi. They had even been cutting off the link among the succubi!

But perhaps this was for the best. Thirty eight succubi had died this time. If they all died at the same time, Licorice, as their commander, might have suffered from a severe mental damage.

In fact, as soon as the link was reestablished, Licorice fainted without being able to say anything. If this had happened in the middle of fighting thousands of undeads, the outcome wouldn't have been pretty.

"I'm worried about Licorice, but when the dungeon's functionality is shut down and we get separated, the succubi's link is the only thing we can rely on to communicate... Is it just the Death King that's special?"

On our plane ride back to Korea, with the fainted Licorice in my arms, Hwaya muttered after examining Licorice's face worriedly. I shrugged my shoulders.

"If you think about it, the succubi's link is based on mana before its being based on their racial trait. It's just that this is the first time it happened, but it's possible to hinder their connection with an overwhelming mana. It might happened more often from now."

“... Huu. In that case, we might have to take the succubi out of the frontline battle. Even if we deploy them, we’ll only be putting their lives at risk.”

What happened this time was unprecedented. I wasn’t talking about the link between succubi being cut. I was talking about an enemy they were incapable of defending against ambushing them. Not to mention, it was in a situation where all members of Revival had left.

No one knew how many more battles we had to face, and considering they would only get harder, putting the succubi on the frontline would be the same as abusing them.

“You’re right, they already suffered so much. There are other places where they can shine, so from now... Mm?”

At that moment, Licorice opened her eyes. For some reason, something about her was off. The starry particles were gone from her pink eyes, and instead, there was a concentric circle in each of her pupils.

“Dear Husband, were you worried?”

“Yeah, and I still am.”

“Don’t worry. I’ve experienced a similar loss once before in Enesis.”

Licorice touched her forehead as she replied calmly. The concentric circles in her pupils expanded and shrunk repeatedly, scaring me slightly. She calmly continued.

“Dear Husband, do you remember what I told you about succubi’s death? That they disappear like morning dew?”

“I remember.”

“Sorry, but that was a lie. Succubi are a subspecies of Mares, which also include vampires and incubi. When succubi die, they don’t return to nature. Instead, they give their mana to their kin. It’s the commonly said ‘being together even after death,’ the ultimate link one can share.”

I didn’t think it was a common saying, but I didn’t say anything. Licorice continued.

“In the past, the Mare Alliance knew about this, and they proposed a plan to kill all my subordinates to concentrate their power on me.”

“What...!?”

“Cruel, isn’t it? Even if I get stronger with hundreds of deaths, the pain from it could have killed me.”

“But the fact that other succubi are still here means...”

Licorice nodded her head like it was obvious.

“I, of course, rejected them. But after that incident, the echelon of leaders and I always kept a shaky relationship. What they considered important was different from what I considered important. So what if we could successfully steal the world’s power? It wouldn’t have mattered if I didn’t have anyone to share it with. Rather than winning using such a method, I would have rather died. That was also why I could easily accept the Dungeon Lord’s offer. As a result of me prioritizing the survival of my kin, us succubi were kept at a respectful distance from the rest of the attackers.”

“Then, your eyes...”

“Un.”

Licorice nodded lightly.

“I didn’t want to carry out such a cruel plan, but I also knew concentrating the succubi’s power rather than dividing the succubi’s power into $1/n$ would net a better result. So the members of my kin agreed to offer their powers to their queen when they died. Even when six succubi died last time... and even now, I received their mana. It was just that it was a little delayed this time because of that lich.”

She gritted her teeth. Her eyes were trembling.

“Too many died. Too many. I didn’t want to get stronger like this...”

Her eyes weren’t the only thing that changed. The appearance of tail and wings changed ever so slightly and were carried a deeper black color. Looking at it, I thought back to time we fought the Lava King. When the six succubi died, Licorice had shown a sudden spike in power. That was likely because she received their mana.

“Sorry, Dear Husband. We can’t send the succubi to battle anymore. Earth’s situation is too dire, and our enemies are too strong. As the succubi’s leader, this is my fault.”

“No, this is my fault. You didn’t do anything wrong, Licorice.”

Licorice shook her head slowly. After thinking about something for a bit, she whispered in a soft voice.

“... I need some time. I’ll have to select a crew.”

“Select? Licorice, the succubi are—”

Licorice put her finger on my lips.

“We have to get stronger... Even if we have to weaken others.”

“You...”

“Sending mana, you don’t have to die to do it.”

Licorice smiled. On her forehead, her lamb-like horns changed direction and pointed outwards. It was as if a wild beast that had focused on defending itself resolved to attack.

“Sorry for telling you this so late, Dear Husband. I didn’t want to take away my family’s power. But I was acting spoiled. Only now realizing it... I’m a failure as a queen.”

“You’re already strong. You helped me a lot until now, and it’s the same for the other succubi. This incident was just...”

“No, it’s not enough. Dear Husband and Hwaya are much stronger than when we first met, but I stayed the same. The other succubi haven’t changed either. Plus... we have less than a year left.”

Licorice’s eyes shone. New starry particles appeared in the middle of the concentric circles in her eyes.

“Half a year is enough. I’ll become strong enough to stand by Dear Husband’s side.”

As I understood her resolve, I didn’t say anything. After a bit,

Licorice smacked her lips and corrected herself.

“That’s probably too hard, but I’ll at least become as strong as Hwaya.”

“Why am I being singled out!?”

“Dear Husband already surpassed the limits of his species! I can’t even imagine how strong he’ll be in half a year!”

Licorice’s affirmation made me happy and a little bit sad. With this complex emotion in mind, I patted the two of them. Even as she grumbled, Hwaya stopped complaining at Licorice, and Licorice finally smiled.

... It was only after we arrived in Korea that we realized we left a golden road in Vatican City.

I wanted to hold a grand funeral for the succubi, but Licorice and the other succubi wanted the same funeral as last time. I, of course, listened to their request. Elementals sang for the succubi and Plene also joined in. Though not extravagant, I still believed it was one of the world’s most beautiful funerals.

After the funeral ended, with much contemplation, I decided to make Mother a dungeon explorer.

The reason was simple. If someone aimed for Mother again, rather than investing many powerful ability users to protect her, it

was much safer to just have her in the dungeon.

Although we wouldn't be able to retrieve explorer appointment rights from her, it was a cheap price to pay to keep her safe. I didn't think they would deploy such a powerful enemy to kidnap Mother, but since she could be used to threaten me, the Hero, it was only logical.

Increasing the number of explorers was the least of our worries. Rather than having a few more explorers, having Mother safe in the dungeon was much better as we wouldn't need to worry about her. If our enemies changed their modus operandi, it was only natural that we do the same.

But since Mother's lack of ability was one of the reason we didn't make her into an explorer sooner, we took this opportunity to appoint well-vetted Korean S ranker to climb the dungeon with Mother. Since Father taught Mother how to run away and gather mana, I believed she wouldn't be too big of a burden. Probably.

After entering the dungeon and coming out, Mother laughed happily. It seemed she forgot all about being kidnapped by the devil doll. Indeed, it was better to forget traumatic experiences. I planned to never let her experience scary things again.

... Though, she'd still have to look at monsters' faces while climbing the dungeon.

"Going in and coming out, it's so simple. How mysterious. So, when can I visit my son's house?"

“You have to reach level 21, Mother.”

“Huhu, you know, I’m really good at games. When I young, I even hit the highest job advancement in [Mapl***ory](#). 3rd was it?”

“No, it’s not that easy. If it was, I would have let Mother become an explorer much sooner. Also, I think that game even has 5th job advancements now...”

I wouldn’t be surprised if it came out with a 6th...

The game was actually Kingdom of the Winds, but I went with Maple Story since it pretty much fills the same role and more people know about it.

Chapter 298. Coming Closer, Going Farther (4)

After expanding the number of explorers, I thought it wouldn't be bad to meet the Pope. He was one of the most influential and richest man on Earth, and although I wasn't the type to be swayed by authority, it wasn't polite to refuse the earnest request of a man respected by 1.2 billion individuals.

When the story of Revival trying to defend Vatican City broke out, we received the absolute support and respect of all Catholic followers. Although we would have done the same no matter where the Death King appeared, considering all the things we had to do in the future, it wasn't a bad thing to have the support of people we needed to protect.

If we could continue this good image by meeting with the Pope, we didn't need to give it a second thought.

When I was getting changed to go to Vatican City, I heard a knock on the door.

“Hero-nim, do you have time?”

As there was only one person that called me Hero-nim, I frowned slightly but still nodded.

“Come in, Ciara.”

As soon as the words left my mouth, the door opened. I closed the buttons on my shirt and asked her.

“Didn’t today’s lesson end?”

“It’s not related to the lesson, Hero-nim. There’s just something I wanted to ask.”

I tilted my head. Ciara took a step closer.

“Hero-nim, is there a reason you didn’t make me into a dungeon explorer?”

“Ah, it’s about that? Because I made Mother into an explorer this time?”

“Yes. For some reason, it’s hard for me to read things related to the dungeon. Even this time...!”

Ciara bit her lips like she was anguished. The crosses in her eyes shone radiantly.

“My predictions were off. The reason I couldn’t find out everything about Hero-nim was also because of the dungeon. So I was thinking, if I become an explorer, wouldn’t I know more about the dungeon?”

“... That’s it?”

“No... To be honest, I’m a bit lonely.”

I was surprised to hear her say she was lonely. Ciara stared at me fixedly and asked me again.

“I want to help Hero-nim even more. I’ll put in the effort to grow my ability. Hero-nim, please let me become a dungeon explorer.”

“I can’t.”

“Hero-nim.”

She had changed and she would likely continue to change. Still, I couldn’t let her become a dungeon explorer, and this wasn’t a problem with her.

“After opening your eyes, you came to see things related to the dungeon, right? Your ability is still growing. You might have missed some things this time, but it won’t be the same next time.”

“But—”

“Your ability is precious and unique. I don’t want other irregularities to mix with your ability. Like I said before, our enemy has come far enough to use the dungeon’s power as their own. You see what I mean, right?”

“... Yes, I understand.”

It didn't look like she understood at all. But, knowing that she was still too young to act completely logically, I lightly patted Ciara's head.

“Good girl. You'll always be with us from now, so you don't have to worry too much about this.”

“Yes, Hero-nim.”

After patting her head one last time and noticing that her breathing has gotten slightly rough, I flicked her forehead and headed off to Vatican City. Really, there were too many people that I couldn't let my guard down around.

The Pope greeted me in a surprisingly unceremonious appearance. After receiving his gratitude and eating lunch together, I politely rejected his offer to go together to a memorial ceremony for the deaths. With that, our meeting ended uneventfully.

But it seemed this was where the real business started. When I was about to leave after saying my goodbye, a Vatican official that seemed to be fairly high ranked stopped me. Seeing as how he was wearing a zucchetto, he seemed to be a priest, no, a bishop at the very least.

“My name is Simon. After Two Moon, the Vatican also created a

new department to oversee monsters' movements. I'm the one in charge."

"Yes."

"I shouldn't hold back Vatican's hero for too long. Though it may be impolite, I will go straight to the point."

He sat me down in his office and served me tea. It was extremely aromatic, but since I didn't know much about tea, I simply told him it was delicious after taking a sip. The official named Simon smiled as if he was relieved and spoke.

"That day, you turned part of Vatican City's road into gold."

"Ah."

I forgot again! Seeing my face, he seemed to have realized what happened as he made a bitter smile.

"Are you... human?"

"Yes, I think so."

"Of course, creating such miracles couldn't be too easy... right?"

"It's not easy at all."

I could imagine the panic if I said it was as easy as drink water, so I just nodded with a serious face. Simon made an even bigger sigh of relief.

“I am Dortu. With mana, I can turn anything into metal.”

Dortu seemed to be offended by my statement as he objected, but thankfully, Simon couldn’t hear Dortu. He continued.

“It goes without saying, but the Vatican has no plans to claim ownership over this gold. During the process of retrieving the bodies of victims, we made sure to prevent anyone from touching it. The Pope himself chimed in.”

“I see.”

No matter how logical this sounded, it wasn’t easy to maintain nonchalance in front of a mass of gold. An entire road turned into gold. It wouldn’t be strange if a war broke out over it. But no one had touched it so far? That took some serious discipline. This event made me realize the power of a religion.

“If you’d like, we can help you collect it.”

“Mm... It’s fine.”

After thinking about it for a bit, I replied.

“I’ll gift it to the Vatican. You must have suffered huge losses from this incident. Hopefully, the money from it can be used to restore even a small part of what was lost.”

Simon dropped his mouth in astonishment and remained frozen for a moment.

“Do you know how much it is?”

“Is it a lot?”

“The width is one thing... but the depth is incredible. We expect it to be several tons at the very least.”

“...”

It was indeed more than I imagined. I immediately thought of price of gold falling, but of course, I was no economist. Simon fiddled with his hands, showing his nervousness, and soon sighed.

“It’s too much. This isn’t something I can handle alone. Though it might be a bit annoying, can you wait here for a moment?”

“Yes, sure.”

As I often say, I've never felt low on money since becoming an explorer. Now that I had gotten to the point of making gold as I pleased, I would probably never experience such a feeling ever again. Of course, I knew better than to wantonly spread gold everywhere and mess up the world's economy.

In any case, it seemed even the Vatican felt receiving such a huge sum of gold was a burden, as a rather incredulous event occurred after the Pope joined in on their discussion.

They gave the road the title 'Hero's Road' and decided to commemorate it. That is, they planned to leave the several tons of gold untouched.

After hearing their decision, I immediately spoke up.

"I'll just take it. The gold."

"We came up with this idea after much discussion! We can't have it any other way!"

Sion clung onto my legs as he cried. I glared at him and asked.

"Can you even protect it if you leave it alone?"

"Of course. This is the Vatican!"

"What about the restoration effort?"

“The Vatican’s wealth is enough to take care of it. Otherwise, we wouldn’t have made such a decision.”

“Which means you’ll be fine even if I take the gold back.”

“Please.”

He didn’t say much. He just pleaded. Almost like he was praying to God, he cupped his hands and stared at me. I needed to report this guy to the Pope for heresy.

“But come on, Hero’s Road? Hero’s Road!?”

“There was also a talk about canonizing you as a saint, but—”

“If you did that, I might have to declare war on the Vatican and the Church.”

“Which is why we shut it down immediately.”

Thinking about it, it wasn’t such a terrible idea. It would renew the Church’s image, and I would receive the appropriate honor. Of course, the Vatican would have to be able to protect Hero’s Road, but as long as they could, Hero’s Road would serve as a imperishable memorial to commemorate both the Vatican and me.

At Cardinal Simon’s earnest plea (right, he was a cardinal), I

agreed to their Hero's Road plan. As a result, any Catholic believer would, to my dismay, come to hear my name at least once. Saving the Vatican, creating several tons of gold, and leaving it all behind in the holy land of Catholicism. Even I thought it sounded like something from a legend.

When Hwaya found out about it through the news, she burst out into laughter.

“Aah, my stomach! S-Shin is a saint!”

“I rejected that offer!”

“Ku, kukukuk, at least my mom would love it. She's a Catholic.”

“Agh!”

“What? Isn't it nice, being loved by your mother-in-law!?”

“I swear, there will be a day when you're called a saint too. I'll laugh my heart out, be prepared.”

In response, Hwaya burst out into laughter again.

“Pu, puhahaha! Yeah, we can be a saint couple together!”

“Eeeek...!”

The next day, however, when the news of Revival members' achievement broke out, her words became reality. In a video in the middle of a land filled with death, Hwaya was endlessly shooting out flames and burning up countless undeads. Several internet forums began to describe her as a saint purifying souls of the dead with sacred flames. This description then spread to the mass media, and people began to refer to her as a saint. Hwaya's face was frozen stiff.

“ ... ”

“A saint clad in sacred flames! Ow!”

“Uuuuk.”

The Death King. He solidified the standing of Revival to an unprecedented level, but at the same time, he affected Revival's guild master and vice-guild master with unavoidable titles. As expected of the Death King, he was amazing even after death.

Chapter 299. Coming Closer, Going Farther

(5)

With the urgent business taken care of, I could finally talk to Kain. He had returned to the dungeon when the fight at the Vatican City ended, and now he had come to Marianne's Garden after I requested him to. When I called him to the reception room and sat him down, he suddenly asked an unexpected question.

“Don't you have too many women?”

“Let's talk about other things.”

“You have Loretta, but you sure are greedy.”

“Let's talk about other things.”

Greedy... I couldn't say I wasn't greedy, but this was the best for everyone! ... Still, saying that pricked my heart.

Was it wrong to want to make everyone happy!? ... Well, maybe it was.

Damn it! I can't even come to my own defense! I still hadn't gotten myself out of Korean mindset. Who could blame me? I was Korean after all!

“I understand. I've experienced similar things. Still, it's your

fault for being born this way. It shouldn't have been hard to reject them early on."

"I didn't know things would turn out this way. Besides, I wasn't born like this!"

I didn't invite him to ask for romantic advice, so I changed the topic.

"Did you make up your mind?"

"I was genuinely surprised. Compared to your enemies, you and your allies are shockingly strong. I was even doubting whether the dungeon set its mind to develop you all."

I grinned. If that's what it looked like, it was probably because Earth's power was distributed to select ability users when monsters first invaded Earth. Unlike in other worlds, these abilities let many of us grow stronger more quickly.

That said, since mana cultivation methods weren't widespread on Earth, this couldn't be called a huge advantage. Moreover, this wasn't the work of the dungeon, but the work of someone else, who wielded Earth's power and gave it to us.

"We pretty much cleaned up most of the monsters' forces. Unfortunately, there are hundreds of thousands of demons, or perhaps even more. We haven't even met the most important Demon Lord yet."

“Demon Lord... I might have fought against demons in the past.”

With that, he made a bitter smile.

“As you know, I don’t really fear many things. Let us cooperate... For what lies beyond.”

Before I noticed, Kain was holding two glasses in his hand. For a moment, I thought he took them out from his inventory, but that wasn’t it. It was a spatial magic. Using his magic power, he created an external space connected to him that allowed him to store and take out items. The inventory would be an evolved version of this magic.

I knit my brows.

“Did you learn that from Loretta?”

“You don’t need to get jealous. You’re the one she loves now, and for me... she was just a kind shopkeeper noona and a teacher that taught me many things. That’s it.”

Shopkeeper noona. To be honest, hearing that from someone else made me feel strange. Not to mention, the look in his eyes and his manner of speech...

I snorted.

“Don’t lie. I didn’t come all the way here being a child.”

“... Regardless, she wasn’t my lover.”

He didn’t deny my accusation and evaded the topic. Then, he took out a bottle of liquor with an unknown label.

“I don’t need any more love. Revenge. That’s enough. For that, I will cooperate with you.”

“What’s that?”

“The last bottle. It’s from my world. Consider it honor.”

“...”

This bottle had to have a special meaning for him. I took the glass from him without a word and let him pour the bottle’s content in it. I then took the bottle from him and poured it into his glass. With that, we toasted.

As I gulped down the liquor, an indescribably pungent smell of a strong liquor invaded my nose, and as if to appease this feeling of suffocation, a spicy sweetness spread down my throat. My chest felt heavy. Something seemed to fill up my insides and in an instant, it burst.

I remained calm with my eyes closed and savored the shock this single glass of alcohol gave me. Soon, I opened my eyes narrowly and asked him.

“... Can a drink’s alcohol content go over 100%?”

“What do you think? Don’t be stupid and take another glass.”

I felt relieved that Father and Walker wasn’t here. Eventually, Kain and I emptied the bottle of liquor, and I went straight into the dungeon. If Father found out, I was afraid he would attack me.

Monsters appearing in Beyond’s 31st floor was none other than Succubus Queens. Compared to the Succubus Queen appearing as the First Dungeon’s 65th Floor Master, Beyond’s Succubus Queens seemed to have higher charm on top of appearing by the hundreds. For ordinary men, this place was worthy of the name Heaven. Though, of course, they would get chased out soon after having their vitality sucked out.

For me, however, this place was one of the easiest floors of Beyond.

“Kyak!”

“How could this be!?”

“Aah, strength is leaving my body.”

When the Succubus Queens saw me, most of them used Sweet Nightmare and with my charm being absurdly high, they received the penalty for their skills failing and blanked out. I simply had stabbed them with my spear and moved on.

The purpose of Beyond's 31st floor was most likely learning how to attack the Succubus Queens while dodging their Sweet Nightmare attacks. For me, none of this mattered. I swung my spear practically randomly as I charged towards the Succubus Queens.

"I can't believe it, but that man is well beyond our capabilities!"

"As expected of our first customer!"

"Curtain of Night!"

"Kiss of Death!"

About half way through the 31st floor, the Succubus Queens began attacking me with different methods. I knew from Licorice that Succubus Queens were also skilled in normal magic. However, Licorice was special even among Succubus Queens, and even though they were strengthened by Beyond, their magic wasn't capable of reaching me. Absolute Soul perfectly defend against any of their mental attacks, and their attribute magic could be easily blocked with Ruyue's power. Even in the worst case, I just had to use Sharana's power to strengthen my defense.

“Aah.”

“I’m not strong enough to fight him.”

“Even if we try to hold him back, we’ll only be wasting our time.”

“I can feel his aura is similar to ours.”

When I seemed close to breaking through the 31st floor, Succubus Queens began to step back like they lost their spirit. It wasn’t like they used Sweet Nightmare, so what was happening? Just when I was thinking that and tilting my head, one of them stepped forward towards me.

“By any chance, did you form a contract with another Succubus Queen?”

“Yeah, I did.”

When was the last time I had a conversation in Beyond instead of fighting? Slightly taken aback, I replied obediently. To show that my guard wasn’t down, I gripped my spear tightly and spun it in my hand. I then stared at her and asked my own question.

“How did you know?”

“Those of us called to Beyond are lacking in purity, but most of

our abilities and memories are remaining.”

She smiled lightly. There were others who smiled at the same time as her, and I noticed that the Succubus Queens looked similar. The Succubus Queen in front of me seemed to have noticed my eyes shining, as she nodded her head.

“Right, they’re all me. After all, how could there be so many Succubus Queens in Enesis? To be precise, they’re fakes created with mana and slightly altered souls. If you ask which one is real, we can’t answer you because even we don’t know.”

“ ... ”

The price the losers had to pay was even more cruel than I thought. That said, I imagined it would be something like this. Even though I knew Enesis was the one that invaded Elesia, I couldn’t help but sympathize with them. Of course, if they showed any sign of hostility, I was fully prepared to smash their heads with my spear.

“Thankfully, we’re on a high floor, so we haven’t regenerated yet and our thinly scattered soul is preserved. I think someone might have mentioned it before. You see, you’re our first customer.”

This was the first time I was officially notified that I had achieved the highest level anyone has ever climbed to in Beyond. Of course, as I didn’t expect another explorer to have surpassed Kain, I wasn’t too surprised.

“I’m going to cut to the chase. Does the Succubus Queen you’re contracted to have pink hair?”

“Yeah.”

A strange air flowed among the succubi, but that was only for a moment. Soon, all succubi nodded altogether and stepped back.

“Then as we thought, you can’t be measured with our abilities. Go to the 35th floor. She’ll be waiting for you there.”

“She?”

“The ruler of us all.”

The Succubus Queen sparkled her eyes and spoke.

“Lilith. The one you guys would call world’s enemy.”

I flinched. I was caught off guard in the most unexpected place. I already had a skill called Lilith’s Temptation. If I could meet her in Beyond’s 35th floor and defeat her...

“I’ll tell the incubi about it, so you can just pass through them. Though... some of them might not accept it and attack you.”

“I’m not scared at all.”

“Yeah, that’s what I thought you’d say. You can go now, charming boy.”

If it was the past me, I would have hunted down even the monsters that didn’t resist. But now, I was different. Knowing that these guys were once Licorice’s comrades and the tragic fate they had to endure, I didn’t really feel like fighting. After talking to them, I didn’t feel like it even more.

Most importantly, I wasn’t so rich in time to fight ones that didn’t pick a fight with me. Not to mention, succubi and incubi were monsters with extremely high attainment in charm rather than martial arts. I didn’t think fighting them would let me surpass my limits in any way. That said, I was looking forward to meeting this Lilith on the 35th floor.

Furthermore, it seemed there really were worlds’ enemies waiting on the higher floors of the dungeon. At this point, I had a suspicion that the dungeon wasn’t made for explorers to climb fully. It felt like unpassable floors were created just for the sake of having more floors.

As I thought of these useless things, I bid my farewell and passed by the Succubus Queens.

“By the way, can you do us a final favor and sleep with us just once—”

With one Succubus Queens being knocked down and dragged

away by the others, all monsters slowly disappeared from my sight.

Then, the gate to the First Dungeon opened.

“Alright, let’s go again.”

First Dungeon’s 82nd floor. Waiting for me there should be an even stronger version of 81st floor’s Crimson Hell.

The peak of the dungeon, what once felt so out of touch, was now fully within my grasp. Day by day, I could feel myself getting closer to it. It wouldn’t be long. Until I reached that place and until they reached me.

I stepped forward.

Chapter 300. Coming Closer, Going Farther (6)

Crimson Hell was strong enough to give me trouble even after I grew stronger through the Beast King. They appeared from anywhere in the dungeon floor and put in great efforts to try and assimilate me.

However, I already learned how to fight against them on the 81st floor. Using Death Knight's skill, Breath of Death, I created chaos flames wrapped in death energy. The moment they touched these flames, they were dyed grey, losing their mana and evaporating.

“I hate how they're so quiet.”

They didn't make any slimy or watery sound. They simply popped out of nowhere, assaulting me. What annoyed me the most was that just being in this place sucked mana out of me. Absolute Soul actively held its defense and protected my mind, but it couldn't stop them completely. It was a true hell.

[I am Dortu. Reinforcing Master's equipment.]

At that moment, Dortu suddenly muttered.

“Reinforce?”

[I am Dortu. Reinforcing all metals.]

Immediately, Pure Black Desire shone with a faint light. Small symbols appeared on its surface along with tiny bumps. It was the same for Chaotic Spear. The spear became slightly longer and a red symbol was engraved above the spear blade.

“Dortu, you...”

[I am Dortu. I did well.]

“Yeah, you did.”

It felt like he wanted me to compliment him, so I did. I still didn’t know how he strengthened my equipment, but I soon found out.

First, Pure Black Desire’s defense went up. Not only its physical defense, but also its magical defense and mana resistance. This meant that Crimson Hell was now stealing less of my mana. Wait, strengthening Pure Black Desire? Even though it was already a Legend grade item?

[I am Dortu. Effect is temporary. Dortu can change it permanently by staying in it for a long time.]

“Dortu... You’re the best.”

Chaotic Spear, on the other hand, had its reinforcement focused around its aura. The amount of aura I could draw out using the

same amount of mana doubled. Crimson Hell seemed surprised by my sudden change, as they backed off before coming together into a giant wave. These damned cowards!

[They're below us too, Master!]

“Sharana! We're going to break through!”

Damn, why did I have to run through waves while climbing the dungeon!? With my spear held out front, I activated Wind King's Rage.

“Sharana!”

[Yes, Master!]

Just by having their names called, my elementals became happy and displayed greater power. Starting from the tip of my spear, a fierce whirlpool covering my entire body rose up. Sharana meticulously and elaborately strengthened this whirlpool, and flames the Chaotic Spear let out with an ominous light decorated the whirlpool.

“Uaaaaaaaah!”

I screamed at the top of my lungs and charged forward into the wave of Crimson Hell!

“Don’t be so cocky when you’re not even the real thing!”

The wave rolled towards me. After clashing with the flaming whirlpool, most of it evaporated and fell apart as they were dyed grey. Although I could only see the fiercely spinning whirlpool in front of me, the sizzling sound of Crimson Hell put a wry smile on my face.

“If you suffered this much, you should know you aren’t strong enough!”

Of course, with their mass, it was hard to maintain this whirlpool. But if I stopped, I knew I would only get engulfed. As such, I tightly shut my mouth and charged forward quickly. Absolute Soul, Peruta Circuit, and Dortu and Sharana’s power. This might be the first time I put this much concentration into manipulating so many powers.

[You cleared the First Dungeon’s 82nd floor. You obtained the qualification to challenge Beyond’s 32nd floor.]

[You obtained 5 bonus stats.]

After running with Wind King’s Rage for some incalculable amount of time, I stopped reflexively in response to a familiar message. As the whirlpool surround my body subsided, I could finally see around me once again. Some distance away was a staircase, and closer by was a black shade, the gate leading to Beyond. There was also Loretta, who was staring at me with a surprised face from the Floor Shop’s stall.

“Shin-nim, you changed your armor and weapon? Did you go see Lin?”

“Ah, no, it’s my elemental.”

“Elemental? ... An elemental that can transform a Legend grade weapon and armor? Mmm...”

I didn’t think too much of it, but it seemed Loretta thought differently. However, after looking like she was hesitating, she didn’t say anything more about it. Instead, she smiled and changed the subject.

“Good work. Worlds’ enemies aren’t easy to deal with, right?”

“Of course.”

“Come here, I’ll give you a massage.”

“I feel like you’ll massage me in inappropriate places.”

“Don’t be a wimp. Ehehe.”

I felt like Loretta forgot all about running the Floor Shop, but seeing her face, I couldn’t refuse her.

“Uhuhuhu, I prepared a mattress in case something like this ever happened.”

“If you touch me in weird places, I’m going straight to Beyond.”

Contrary to Loretta’s suspicious manner of speech, she really gave a genuine massage. When I lied down on the mattress with my armor and spear back to its bracelet and choker form, she got on top of me and pressed her thumbs down on my sore muscles. An ordinary person would have had his bones shattered, but I was now strong enough to withstand her strength. Every time she pressed her fingers down, a cool breeze seemed to flow into me. I even got these messages.

[Your magic stat increases by 1.]

[Your magic stat increases by 2.]

[Your luck stat increases by 3.]

[Your constitution stat increases by 2.]

“it’s a special energy only the Elf Queen can use. I can’t use it very often so you should enjoy it now. So? How is it? Refreshing, right?”

“Mm, my stats are increasing permanently... Isn’t this abusable?”

“... Normally, this technique can only be used on an Elf Queen’s spouse, so don’t tell other elves.”

I grinned and fully relaxed my body for her massage. When I closed my eyes and untensed my body, Loretta laughed as she continued her massage.

“Heh... Yep, if it’s Shin-nim... Huhu.”

“Did you say something?”

“I said I love Shin-nim.”

“Mm... I love Loretta too.”

“... Hiing, I didn’t record it again.”

Loretta frowned while she continued to massage me diligently. I also laughed lightly.

I knew that wasn’t what Loretta initially said. I knew she was still hiding something from me, but I didn’t ask.

She was an Elf Queen that had lived for over 2000 years. She wasn’t obligated to tell me everything she knew, and even if what she wasn’t telling me was related to me, I knew she had my best interest in mind. This level of trust was already fully ingrained

between the two of us.

A pleasant silence flowed, and soon, we moved on to a different topic.

“Did Kain properly enter Shin-nim’s guild?”

“Yes. He decided to cooperate with me for a common goal.”

“Really, I thought I knew everything about Shin-nim... Before I noticed, Shin-nim has been finding out about things even I didn’t know about, and Shin-nim can now easily do things that seemed so hard for me.”

Her way of talking sounded like a mother proud of the children she raised. I couldn’t help but laugh.

“You don’t like it?”

“No, I think having a secret or two can be more charming. I don’t plan on interrogating Shin-nim about it.”

“Loretta’s charming too.”

“Uuu, meanie.”

Loretta became quiet. I continued the story about Kain.

“I think Kain might have lingering feelings for Loretta.”

“I thought so. I’m very pretty, you see.”

“Wow.”

“Wow!? What does that mean!?”

“It means I love you.”

“That won’t trick me!”

Loretta’s acupressure got harder, but I simply laughed. If I hadn’t obtained the Beast King’s power, my bones would have broke undoubtedly.

[Your charm stat increases by 3.]

[Your luck stat increases by 3.]

“Ah, this is enough. Just how much power do you plan on using?”

“But—”

“We can do it again next time. I have to go now.”

I got up and stretched. Her massage made me feel refreshed like the time I reformed my body. I lightly patted Loretta who seemed to want more and jumped into Beyond without even wearing my armor.

Then, in just 30 minutes, I jumped out of the gate. Loretta, who was yawning at the Floor Shop, widened her eyes in surprise. After examining me from head to toe, she called my name with a dumbfounded voice.

“... Shin-nim?”

I waved my hand at her and ran up the stairs.

“I’ll see you on the 83rd floor, Loretta!”

“... Eh? Shin-nim! Shin-nim! What was that!? You went into Beyond, right!? How are you going up to the 83rd floor? What’s going on!?”

Even after I fully stepped into the 83rd floor, I felt like I could hear Loretta’s panicked shouts. I found it very interesting.

From the 81st floor to the 85th floor, I could practically skip Beyond, so Crimson Hell was the only obstacle I had to deal with. Thankfully, Crimson Hell on the higher floors didn’t come with strange added effects. They were simply stronger in the amount of

mana they sucked in and the amount they appeared in.

I was increasing my skill proficiencies more by fighting the Crimson Hell than I was by training in Beyond. From what I felt, Absolute Soul seemed to be growing the most. It reached level 8 during my break through of the 83rd floor, and in the 84th floor which had a wider hallway and increased aggressiveness of Crimson Hell, Absolute Soul finally reached level 9. Even I couldn't believe it.

“Huu... So it's not just my imagination. Peruta Circuit's efficiency is increasing too.”

Absolute Soul aimed to achieve the perfect soul. Its ability to absorb mana was a natural effect resulting from the increased league of my soul, but after it reached level 9, not only did it steal mana from monsters, it also naturally absorbed mana from all things in the universe. When I used Peruta Circuit to absorb mana, its efficiency even multiplied severalfold.

Moreover, I was getting more familiar with Dortu, who was born not too long ago, and I could now use his ability more efficiently. I also became more adept at using Peruta Circuit, which was too complex to be described as 'mastered.'

“Crimson Hell might be the fallen state of an lifeform that tried to reach for a higher league.”

Perhaps, the pitiful creature might still be thinking it's reaching towards a whole soul.

It wasn't just Crimson Hell. The worlds' enemies I've met were all continually evolving. What was their ultimate goal? Was it perfecting themselves like Absolute Soul? But even a world's power couldn't...

“... Ugh, I almost thought of something again.”

It was probably too abstract for me to answer definitely. For a moment, however, I felt my heart drop and beat loudly. My instincts seemed to be telling me that I was walking the right path. That if I continued, I would be able to run quicker than anyone else.

But... Why? Why only me?

I didn't know. I wasn't allowed to know the answer right now, so I could only go on. One day, when I arrive at the destination, I'll be able to know.

I kicked open the giant door in front of me. It was there waiting for me.

“Fight me, Crimson Hell!”

The 85th Floor Master battle was now beginning.

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